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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE SOCIAL CLASSES IN
THE WRITINGS OF GEORG BÜCHNER

by



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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Social Classes in The Writings of Georg Büchner submitted by Valerie Ann Ridgway in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, a study of Büchner's portrayal of the social classes and their problems has been undertaken, based on the material found in his private and creative writings. His private views are, of course, relatively well known, and these have been used to substantiate, where possible, the interpretations of the dramas, which form the chief subject of discussion.

As a politician and a poet, Büchner was firmly opposed to the existent system of government and social organisation in Hesse and other parts of Germany. He saw society divided into two "classes," the wealthy and the poor. Each class had its separate values and characteristics; these are examined in this study in the light of Büchner's claim that the society which was governed and influenced by the wealthy class was unjust, unhealthy and distorted, and that the sole hope for improvement was to be found in the people.

Chapter I deals with the socio-political basis of this society, which Büchner felt to be of primary importance. Chapters II and III discuss the personal characteristics of the two classes; in the first case with regard to spiritual problems, and in the second case in their reactions to nature. In both these chapters, the weaknesses and the distorted values prevailing in the upper class are contrasted with the attitudes and behaviour of the people. The latter emerge as potentially healthier than their social superiors, though Büchner offers no ideal figure. Chapter IV restricts itself to the dramatic

techniques whereby Büchner differentiates the classes. This chapter does not introduce any new material; in presenting some aspects of Büchner's handling of the classes on stage, it will serve to add emphasis to conclusions stated earlier.

It becomes increasingly clear that for Büchner, the existent social system does nothing to promote the cause of humanity; on the contrary, it is adverse to man, in that it intensifies and aggravates his most basic weaknesses. Egocentricity and lovelessness are seen as characteristic of the old society. Since the common people are, in many respects, free from the spiritual corruptions of the upper class, they represent, for Büchner, the sole hope for a new and better society, which would be founded on principles of humanity. The hope is tentative only, but it is clearly suggested by Büchner's presentation of the potentially humane values of the people against the background of decay and egocentricity illustrated by their leaders and superiors.

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INTRODUCTION

As a preliminary to this study, the precise meaning of the title, of the term "social classes," must be clearly established and borne in mind. As we shall see, Büchner presents in his writings not the now usual sociological system of classes and their respective characteristics, but one single, and far simpler, class division. For him, society was divided into "Arme" and "Reiche;" wealth was, in his view, the main cause of the social tensions of his time. On one side of the division, the suffering masses are represented, oppressed, miserable and starving; on the other, the wealthier members of society, including all ranks, from the monarch to the lower bourgeois figure. Wealth and possession became for Büchner the basis for his analysis of social conditions which incensed him.

Büchner's adherence to this basic principle was emotional, rather than based on historical, political or scientific theories. It stemmed from the combination of compassion for human suffering, and a sense of justice: "Er kennt keine Parteisprache und es fehlt ihm das ausgesprochen wirtschaftliche Denken."¹ He was not a theorist, but a man of action, a political agitator, who had become primarily aware of the misery of the poor. In his creative writings, too, the same basic attitudes which motivated his private activities find expression. Though his works and ideas are bound to reflect the social thinking which predominated in the rest-

less years of the 1830's (the ideas of the French Socialist Blanqui, and of the then fashionable St. Simonists, for example), he does not belong to any specific school of thought. According to one of his fellow conspirators, "das reinste Mitleid"² inspired his political thinking and activities. It was to the poor that he gave his compassion, and he saw the potential enemy of the poor class in any wealthier social group.

The social condition was one of the burning questions which troubled Büchner throughout his life: his letters, his political pamphlet, the Hessische Landbote, and his dramas all bear witness to his concern for the social problems of his lifetime, for their future, as well as their present. Much of his short adult life, too, was devoted to the struggle against his own rigid and reactionary government in Hesse. Social characteristics contribute to the shaping of the figures in his dramas in varying degrees, even though specifically "social" questions are not always under discussion. It is intended in this study to examine in all of Büchner's adult writings, with stress on the dramas, his views on the nature of the two "classes" and the society they form. The body of criticism on Büchner is already extensive, and the social aspects of his writing figure largely in scholarly interpretations of his work.³ Nevertheless, it was felt that something new could be added, in an analysis of all the major factors and characteristics--political, personal and dramatic--which determine Büchner's social classes.

The material for the interpretations in this study is

drawn from three sources, which cannot be evaluated equally, since they are different forms of writing with different purposes. The most direct expression of Büchner's views on society and its problems is found in his letters, which then provide a basis for the evaluation of his propagandist pamphlet, the Landbote. There are parallels between these two types of private writings⁴ and his creative works, with regard to the social classes; consequently, the former can be used as substantiation for material in the dramas. Differences also exist between the dramas; Leonce und Lena, for instance, as a comedy cannot be interpreted in the same way as the tragic dramas; and Woyzeck is unfinished, so that the exact degree of social indictment cannot be determined with any certainty.

In undertaking this thesis, a particular statement of Büchner, in a letter of 1836 to Gutzkow, has been borne in mind: "Ich glaube, man muss in sozialen Dingen von einem absoluten Rechtsgrundsatz ausgehen, die Bildung eines neuen geistigen Lebens im Volke suchen und die abgelebte moderne Gesellschaft zum Teufel gehen lassen" (Werke, p. 412). This statement expresses succinctly Büchner's ideas about society; the spiritual and material corruption of society under the organisation of its leaders at that time, and the hope for renewal through the influence of the people. His attitudes towards the upper and lower classes are investigated on three levels: the socio-political characteristics of the classes and their society; their personal qualities--divided into their attitude to spiritual⁵ problems and their attitude to nature; and finally, the way in which Büchner presents his classes on the stage.

CHAPTER I

SOCIO-POLITICAL PROBLEMS

A. "Die Armen" and "die Reichen"

The problem of class relationships in society permeates Büchner's correspondence and his political writing as a major theme. In addition, some part of the material in his dramas presents the representatives of certain social groups and their specific problems. Regardless of the spiritual problems discussed, social background and the relationship between the classes are always felt to be an integral part of the dramas.

The social background is the basis on which the dramas are built: against it all characters must react. To understand fully the nature of the social problems which Büchner presents in his writings, it is necessary to examine his views about the fundamental social background. Büchner's antipathy towards the system of government as it stood in Hesse and other parts of Germany at that time is immediately apparent: his hatred and disapproval, both of the material and of the spiritual weaknesses in it, run through all his writings. Lenz is the sole exception, and even here it has been suggested by Mayer¹ that the poet Lenz is a product of a sick society, of which madness is a manifestation.

The specific society against which Büchner fought was one which divided its members basically into two "classes." The members of the upper class were characterised chiefly by power, education and wealth; the members of the lower class were characterised by lack of these attributes. Büchner simplifies the division into one of rich and poor. Both classes, as the result of this very simple division, have a complex structure. "Die Reichen" include all social ranks from the king or ruler down to the lower bourgeoisie, and officers like the Captain in Woyzeck. Regardless of the individual attitudes within the class, all these groups constitute for Büchner the enemy of the people, hostile to their interests and retarding social progress. Members of the poor, too, vary from the more astute agitators of the crowd in Dantons Tod, down to beggars, prostitutes and people like Woyzeck. It is to the poor that he gave his personal and dramatic sympathy. Because of this sympathy, it should be added that he tends to oversimplify in his analysis and discussion of social problems.

The consequences of the division meant firstly, that an unhealthy society resulted, in which one large group of people was disregarded and oppressed. The ties that should unify a community were broken in the antagonism of the two groups. Secondly, the system as it stood was rigid: those who benefited from it were obviously anxious to perpetuate it; those who did not benefit were powerless and could not change it lawfully.

The system which produced the great number of pro-

blems of which Büchner writes was similar to the feudal system, in that the people were little more than serfs; hence, this kind of government belonged to earlier centuries. In a letter to Gutzkow, from Strasbourg, in 1836, Büchner speaks of its utter uselessness: "Ich glaube, man muss . . . die abgelebte moderne Gesellschaft zum Teufel gehen lassen. Zu was soll ein Ding wie diese zwischen Himmel und Erde herumlaufen?" (Werke, p. 412). And earlier, writing to his family on April 5, 1833, from Strasbourg: "Unsere Landstände sind eine Satire auf die gesunde Vernunft . . . Was nennt Ihr denn gesetzlichen Zustand? Ein Gesetz, das die grosse Masse der Staatsbürger zum fronenden Vieh macht, um die unnatürlichen Bedürfnisse einer unbedeutenden und verdorbenen Minderzahl zu befriedigen?" (Werke, pp. 368-369). What is natural is normative for many of the ideas in Büchner's works, and the same norm is applied to his concept of society: a society in which one whole section of its members is unnaturally and unreasonably ill-treated is a detestable inequity.

The Hessische Landbote deals exclusively with the wrongs of such a feudalistic government as was found at that time in Hesse and other German states. The more enlightened agitators in Hesse consisted of the bourgeois Liberals led by Weidig, and the much more radical group led by Büchner, the "Gesellschaft der Menschenrechte." They were divided in their aims, for Büchner wanted complete political organisation of the State of Hesse, based on fairer socio-economic principles, whereas Weidig wanted an enlightened monarchy, with political

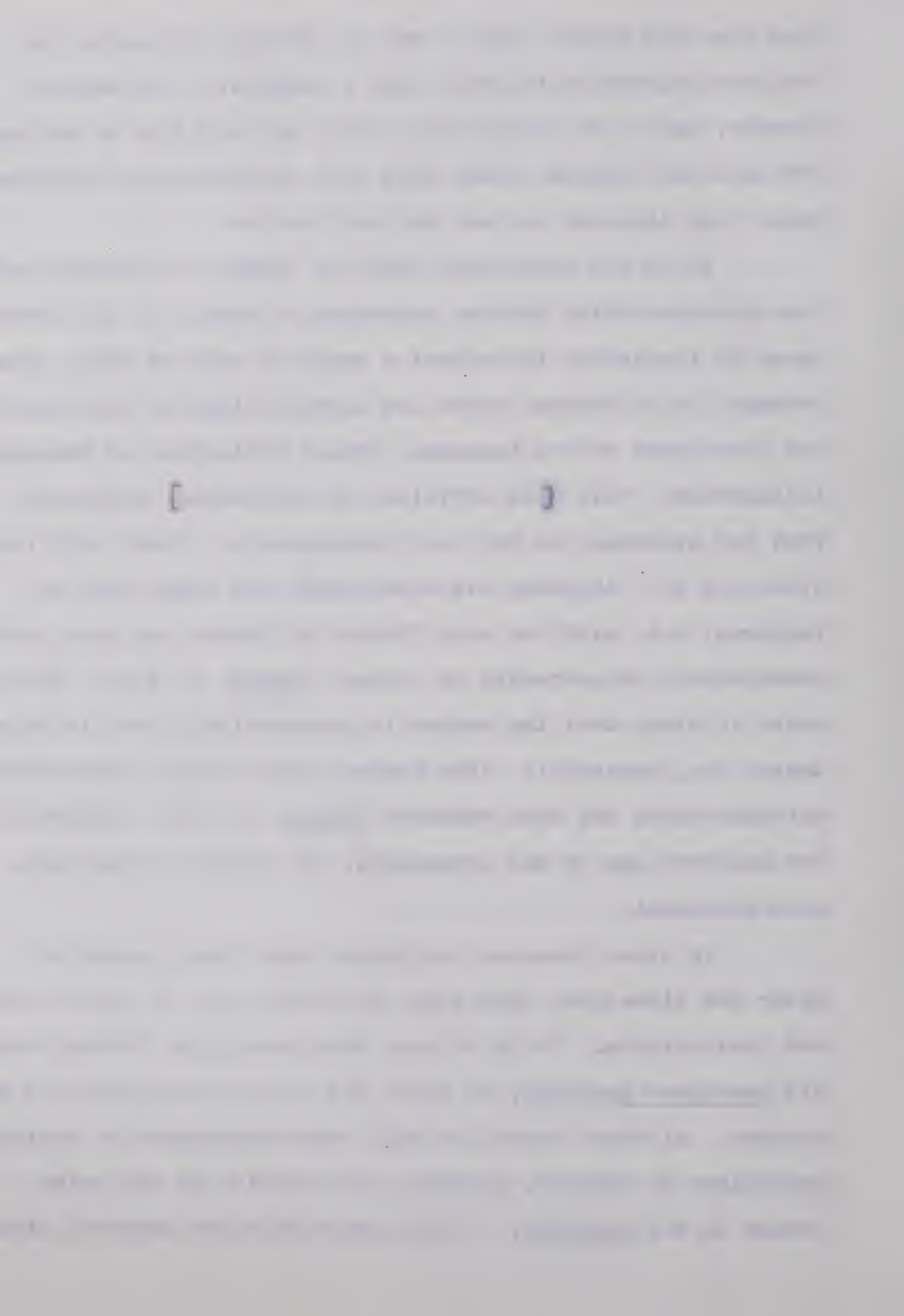
freedom and greater distribution of political power. Büchner's stress lay on the emancipation of the lower class, Weidig's on the freedom of the bourgeoisie: "Was Büchner wollte: eine Mobilisierung der proletarischen Klasseninstinkte gegen die Gesamtheit der Besitzenden, Propaganda für eine auf das 'notwendige Bedürfnis der grossen Masse', gegründete soziale Revolution--das vertrug sich mit Weidigs Kampf um eine bürgerlich-demokratische Verfassung so wenig, wie der christlich getönte Idealismus des Mannes aus der Generation der Freiheitskriege mit dem naturrechtlichen Radikalismus des Studenten aus der Generation des Vormärz."² Whereas Weidig was concerned with the political injustice of the government, Büchner's revulsion stemmed from much more basic, and more humane, causes. He abhorred the suffering caused in the lower class because of their insignificant position in society, and abhorred the abuse of this same class by both the aristocrats and their bourgeois aides. "Die politischen Verhältnisse könnten mich rasend machen. Das arme Volk schleppt geduldig den Karren, worauf die Fürsten und Liberalen ihre Affenkomödie spielen. Ich bete jeden Abend zum Hanf und zu den Laternen," he writes to his family in 1833, some months before the conspiracy was planned to take place (Werke, p. 376).

Büchner and Weidig were, however, united in the fight against the common enemy, the reactionary government of Hesse and other German states. Together, they published the Hessische Landbote, a political pamphlet intended to agitate the masses to revolt. It was Büchner who insisted on the need for sup-

port from the masses, and he was accordingly authorised by the revolutionaries to write such a pamphlet. The result, however, had to be drastically edited and modified by Weidig, for whom the original ideas were both unsuitable and extreme, since they attacked in part his own faction.

It is not surprising that the themes of injustice and unnaturalness which Büchner expresses privately in his letters occur so frequently throughout a pamphlet such as this. The passages which Büchner wrote are characterised by the force and directness of the language, itself indicative of Büchner's indignation: "sie [the officials of government] herrschen frei und ermahnen das Volk zur Knechtschaft. Ihnen gebt ihr 6,000,000 Fl. Abgaben; sie haben dafür die Mühe, euch zu regieren; d.h. sich von euch füttern zu lassen und euch eure Menschen-und Bürgerrechte zu rauben" (Werke, p. 335). Büchner makes it clear that the system is anachronistic, and in this sense, too, unnatural: "Der Unsinn aller vorigen Geschlechter hat sich darin auf euch vererbt" (Werke, p. 335). In stressing the anachronisms of the government, the system appears even more abhorrent.

In size, however, the masses were large enough to alter the situation, once they were made aware of their power and their rights. It is to make them aware that Büchner wrote his Hessische Landbote, in which the whole class system is denounced. Although there are many other weaknesses in society criticised by Büchner, material exploitation is the chief outcry in the Landbote. He was aware that the material situa-



tion alone--"das notwendige Bedürfnis der grossen Masse" (Werke, p. 371)--had the potential power to move the people.

In the Landbote the Grand-Duke is called "der Kopf des Blutigels, der über euch hinkriecht" and later, an animal, "das die Götzendiener unserer Zeit anbeten" (Werke, p. 338). Above all else, Büchner stresses the injustice of the position of the head of state: he is only a "Menschenkind," like his subjects, "und doch hat es seinen Fuss auf eurem Nacken, hat 700,000 Menschen an seinem Pflug . . . hat Gewalt über euer Eigentum durch die Steuern . . . über euer Leben durch die Gesetze" (Werke, p. 338). From these examples, it can be seen that the unfair relationship of the ruler to his people is Büchner's deepest concern. As the exploiters and persecutors of the largest section of society, the ruling castes can only be condemned for their inhumanity.

In Leonce und Lena, the relationship of the king to his subjects is not a fully developed theme. Through the medium of satire, however, in the brief glimpses into the life of the kingdom, Büchner criticises a society which revolves round the king on all levels, from the highest court officials to the lowliest of peasants. Such satire fills the court scenes of I,2, and III,3, in which the king is consistently foolish and the courtiers consistently obsequious. The peasants, too, are presented as subservient and stupid in their attitude to their social superiors, including the schoolmaster who trains them to cheer at the royal procession. The ironic titles given to the two kingdoms, Pipi and Popo, imply a scorn-

ful attitude to the system of government in this drama. The emptiness of court procedure is made fun of by the plot: the two fugitives, Leonce and Lena, who are part of the court life, flee from reality to find each other in a make-believe world, and go through a make-believe marriage of masks to find again their place in reality. Though there are more complex motivations and reasons for the comedy's plot, it can, at this level, be understood as another facet of the worthless life led by the rulers.

The aristocracy and the courtiers in Leonce und Lena are portrayed as comic, foolish figures, as are the king and peasants. They are ridiculed, rather than attacked. Elsewhere, however, Büchner can be bitter and completely damning in his attitude to the aristocracy. The inhumanity of their powerful position repulses him most. In a letter to his family, from Giessen, in February, 1836, he calls the aristocracy "die schändlichste Verachtung des Heiligen Geistes im Menschen" (Werke, p. 378). In the Landbote, the aristocrats are "Schröpfköpfe, die er [the king] dem Lande setzt" (Werke, p. 338).

Leonce und Lena contains occasional echoes of the Landbote: Leonce, for example, calls the governing body of Popo "Puppen und Spielzeug" (Werke, p. 146). In the Landbote, the puppet represents the courtiers and ducal advisors: "Könnte aber auch ein ehrlicher Mann jetzo Minister sein oder bleiben, so wäre er, wie die Sachen stehn in Deutschland, nur eine Drahtpuppe, an der die fürstliche Puppe zieht" (Werke, p. 337).³



To some extent, Leonce's personal problems can be regarded as the product of the society Büchner satirises. Given his background and upbringing as we see them in the drama, he can, as an intelligent person, only be bored and idle existing in it. It is nevertheless questionable, whether he himself sees the inherent danger of such a background, for the ending shows no interest on his part for improving the government.

Another echo of the Landbote in Leonce und Lena is the sarcastic style which is the main device of the pamphlet. For instance, the hunger of the poor is ironically contrasted in the pamphlet with the feasting of the nobility, demonstrated in the picture of the poor viewing a royal banquet. In Leonce und Lena, we have the scene of the peasants being allowed to enjoy the aroma of the roast which is prepared for the royal wedding: "Erkennt, was man für euch tut: man hat euch gerade so gestellt, dass der Wind von der Küche über euch geht und ihr auch einmal in eurem Leben einen Braten riecht" (Werke, p. 140). In spite of their stupidity, there is a certain pathos about the peasants, for they have no choice of action but to obey, especially when they are physically so oppressed, as this scene indicates.

Members of the bureaucracy attendant on these ruling figures are similarly treated with sarcasm and disgust. They are one main target of criticism in the pamphlet, in which Büchner writes: "Das Volk ist ihre Herde, sie sind seine Hirten, Melker und Schinder" (Werke, p. 335). Even before

this was published, in July, 1834, he had developed an antipathy towards the bureaucracy which is apparent in his letter from Strasbourg, for example, in April, 1834. In this letter, he refers to "einem kriechenden Staatsdiener-Aristokratismus" (Werke, p. 383). The hatred recurs later, after Büchner's suspected involvement in the Hesse conspiracy. In a letter to his family, from Giessen, in August, 1834, he writes of "den Händen dieser schmutzigen Menschen" (Werke, p. 385). Büchner was personally disturbed and exasperated by the bureaucrats during his stay in Giessen. His experiences there obviously lend some emphasis to his denunciation of them.

There are also two scenes belonging to the manuscripts of Leonce und Lena and Woyzeck which indicate this antipathy of Büchner towards the servants of the state --in this case the police. Büchner, as a leader of the Hesse conspiracy, lived for a time under the threat of judicial action against him. The antipathy towards the police, which is apparent in these scenes, is perhaps partly influenced by this period of uneasiness. The scene from Leonce und Lena, though rejected by Büchner for the final version, deals with the cowardice, blindness and stupidity of the police (Werke, pp. 477-478). Though the critical tone is evident, the police are treated comically, like the other figures in Leonce und Lena. The scene from Woyzeck has proved problematical for critics and editors, for Büchner may have planned it as part of the ending. Most of them discard it from the final version.⁴ It would give the drama a much more bitter social flavour. The

scene shows a police official relishing the thought of "ein guter Mord, ein ächter Mord, ein schöner Mord" (Werke, p. 496). Whether or not it was intended to form part of the ending, it certainly indicates Büchner's consistent dislike of the bureaucracy and its inhuman attitude.

Büchner's interpretation of the class system is entirely coloured by his concern for the material suffering of the lower class. Both the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy he sees as the common enemy to be defeated, for their interests are based on wealth; emancipation of the lower class would jeopardise the wealthy. He comprehends the functioning of society as a whole only with reference to its largest group, and he can see no redeeming features in the aristocrats and their bourgeois supporters. He is, then, strongly prejudiced in his evaluation of the class system, and always condemns the inequality, in degrees ranging from humorous sarcasm to bitter hatred.

B. The social problems of the class society

Since the social system described is seen by Büchner to be so unhealthy, it can only be expected that serious social problems should be evident in his dramas and other writings. These problems stem from the oppression of the lower class by the upper class. Members of the latter are in a position of power, so that they alone introduce and organise social institutions. As a result of this, only they benefit from these institutions.

The powerful position of the upper classes is greatly enhanced by the fact that they accumulate the wealth of society through means which are legalised, but grossly unjust. Wealth, and its opposite, poverty, are issues which Büchner regards as the main problems of the class society. His comment to Gutzkow in a later letter from Strasbourg: "Das Verhältnis zwischen Armen und Reichen ist das einzige revolutionäre Element" (Werke, p. 396) is the principle which is basic to all his socio-political thinking.

Büchner's antipathy towards the bourgeois Liberals of the Weidig faction of the Hesse revolutionaries is intensified because they are relatively wealthy. Even in their joint pamphlet, the Hessische Landbote, Büchner's antagonism is barely concealed. The bourgeois Liberals were possessors, and more interested in political freedom than the emancipation of the poor and oppressed, Büchner's main concern. Money figures largely in the text of the Landbote, but it would have been a more pointed theme, had Büchner's original text been left untouched. His main accusation had been against "die Reichen," the class he saw as the chief enemy of the suppressed poor, and the class to which many of his fellow conspirators belonged. Weidig, who immediately perceived the implication, altered the word "Reichen" to "Vornehmen," a term meaning specifically the aristocrats, who were the political enemy of the bourgeois Liberals.

Büchner's use of statistics in the pamphlet is highly effective in substantiating his accusations. The statistics

illustrate the contrast between the want of the people, and the huge sums acquired by the government--and, Büchner implies, acquired solely to be retained amongst the governing authorities, for the people gain no advantage from the finances of state. Statistics are continually introduced to reveal aspects of government financing--taxation, revenue, expenditure--and as a reminder of the injustice being carried out. The Hesse peasants were granted no economic rights, being little more than serfs. Consequently, they were forced to pay a large share of the taxes, while deriving little benefit from government expenditure.

The injustice of the distribution of wealth in society is the main theme and outcry of the Landbote, but it is also demonstrated in the comments and attitudes of the crowd in Dantons Tod. In this drama, the protest is notably directed against the bourgeois revolutionaries, for they are associated by the people with the old enemy, the aristocracy. The cry is, however, essentially the same: the denunciation of the rich by the poor. There is clearly a great deal of sympathy on the part of Büchner for the people and their plight: in a style very similar to that of the pamphlet, with its sharp contrasts, a member of the crowd cries in I,2: "Ihr habt Löcher in den Jacken, und sie haben warme Röcke; ihr habt Schwielen in den Fäusten, und sie haben Samthände. Ergo, ihr arbeitet, und sie tun nichts; ergo, ihr habt's erworben, und sie haben's gestohlen" (Werke, p. 14). In Woyzeck, the theme of the unfair distribution of wealth is again struck.

When given the earrings by the Drum-Major, Woyzeck's superior, Marie complains: "Unsereins hat nur ein Eckchen in der Welt und ein Stückchen Spiegel, und doch hab' ich ein' so roten Mund als die grossen Madamen mit ihren Spiegeln von oben bis unten und ihren schönen Herrn, die ihnen die Händ küssen. Ich bin nur ein arm Weibsbild!" (Werke, p. 157). In a more emotional tone, Woyzeck looks at his sleeping child and comments: "Die hellen Tropfen stehn ihm auf der Stirn; alles Arbeit unter der Sonn, sogar Schweiss im Schlaf. Wir arme Leute!--Da is wieder Geld, Marie; die Löhnung und was von mein Hauptmann" (Werke, p. 158).

These two comments by Marie and Woyzeck occur in the same brief scene. The tone of protest against the economic injustice of society is unmistakable, both here and elsewhere in the drama. One of the most striking controversies in the critical examination of Woyzeck has resulted from the various interpretations and evaluations of the social elements in Woyzeck. The critics disagree fundamentally on this particular issue. Gundolf takes one extreme view by negating the social elements: "entstanden ist weder ein Tendenzstück noch eine Elendsstudie, sondern ein Schicksalstraum aus unterer Sphäre. Die Gesellschaftsschicht ist im Woyzeck eine Stimmung."⁵ Mayer takes another extreme view of these elements by making them entirely responsible for the murder of Marie by Woyzeck.⁶ Other critics--like Viëtor,⁷ Büttner⁸ and Dosenheimer⁹--acknowledge both social and spiritual or psychological aspects in the drama, but minimise the element of social protest in

favour of the others. Later critics like May¹⁰ and van Dam¹¹ have made a conscious effort to find a middle way which unites in Woyzeck the spiritual and the social man. It cannot be denied that the social superiors of Woyzeck, both within the army and without, treat him in an inhuman way, and that they can only do this because he is poor. It can also be claimed that the personality of Woyzeck, who is mentally deranged and behaves in an odd and disturbing manner, has been spoilt by the poverty of his social position. An important element in the plot centres around Woyzeck's employment with the Doctor: because he is poor, Woyzeck is forced to accept the humiliations of the Doctor, as well as the physical deprivation of his diet. His exposed material situation makes his personal tragedy, which is not only of a social nature, even more severe: "ich bin ein armer Teufel und hab sonst nichts auf der Welt" (Werke, p. 162). He is poor, uneducated, ill-treated, and only has Marie and his child to turn to--until she forsakes him. Furthermore, the social status of Woyzeck is important, for he, the lowest member of society, is a living illustration of love in a loveless world. Büchner's portrayal of Woyzeck is, in this respect, most significant of all.

Another aspect of society which Büchner examines and denounces in his private writings is the legal system. Instituted by the rulers, the laws were naturally designed to perpetuate the status quo, and gave no opportunity for redress. In a letter to his family, from Giessen, in August, 1834, Büchner speaks of the "gesetzlichen Anarchie" (Werke, p. 388),

to which he is subjected under the repressive and reactionary government of Hesse, anxious to stifle any protest. In the Hessische Landbote, the law is revealed as an unfair and unnatural means of safeguarding the old system, without any regard for the greater interests of society: "das Eigentum einer unbedeutenden Klasse von Vornehem und Gelehrten, die sich durch ihr eigenes Machwerk die Herrschaft zuspricht" (Werke, p. 335). It is significant that in the works of Büchner, the only two references to law--the trial of Danton, and the scene already discussed from Woyzeck, in which the police officials come to arrest Woyzeck--show the law in each case to be connected with a powerful and loveless authority. In Dantons Tod, the legal officials are, moreover, corrupt. A further condition is criticised in the Landbote: the laws governing the election of representatives are based on wealth, since possession is a prerequisite for election. Thus, the moneyed class is assured of securing its own interests. All these laws are, in Büchner's view, anachronistic (one criticism being that they were ancient, and written in Latin) and offensive, for the poor and oppressed, the largest and most needy members of society, find no means of expression under them.

The Church is an institution which Büchner criticises in his letters¹² as a tool of the politicians. Though essentially a social organisation, it had become closely connected with the state. The connection between temporal and ecclesiastical power suggests the medieval Empire in Germany, and this is Weidig's chief aim. His insertions in the

Landbote envisage the German States as a divinely sanctioned unit under the leadership of the Emperor. Büchner, who disagreed with Weidig on most fundamental levels, did not foresee any kind of religious influence in the future society; he does not attempt to use religion as propaganda, as Weidig does. In this respect, Weidig showed a greater awareness of the response of the masses than Büchner, who relies much more on the force of statistics and reason in his part of the text. Büchner perhaps learnt the value of religious propaganda at this time, for at a later date, he writes to Gutzkow about inciting the masses: "Für sie gibt es nur zwei Hebel: materielles Elend und religiöser Fanatismus. Jede Partei, welche diese Hebel anzusetzen versteht, wird siegen" (Werke, p. 412). Elsewhere he refers in a letter to the self-seeking actions of the regime, which proclaims God's cause as its cause (Werke, p. 408).

In Woyzeck, a strong religious element runs throughout, on a purely social level rather than political. There is a marked contrast between Marie and Woyzeck, those who sincerely accept and apply the maxims of Christianity, and the Captain, who regards these maxims superficially, as a social code. The Captain expresses a hollow morality, based on the words of the Chaplain, the Church's spokesman. Religion is portrayed as a social institution connected with the higher class, and it reinforces the division of society by its shallow standards: Woyzeck is unacceptable and treated with disrespect by the Captain. Echoing his preacher's words, he tells Woyzeck: "Er hat ein

Kind ohne den Segen der Kirche, wie unser hochhehrwürdiger Herr Garnisonsprediger sagt,--ohne den Segen der Kirche, es ist nicht von mir" (Werke, p. 152). By contrast, Woyzeck counters the empty words of the Captain with references to the words of Christ about children, but his remarks are completely incomprehensible to the Captain. Marie, too, is able to formulate judgement of her own behaviour by going to the words of Christ to the aduress, words which are a condemnation and a solace to her.

In Leonce und Lena, in which so many aspects of man's life are questioned, the Church, too, does not escape criticism. Büchner mocks it, in a playful way, in his portrayal of the marriage scene, when all the details suggest ridicule: Valerio's sacrilegious words about the Creation mingle with the solemn pronouncements of the royal priest, while these same solemn words become complicated to the point of nonsense; and all this takes place for the marriage of two masks.

Existent education, like organised religion, was characteristic of the higher class, and Büchner attacks it as another way of suppressing and abusing the poor. He presents it as a prerogative of the wealthy and powerful class, which provides empty learning with no real basis for understanding. When Büchner criticises the educated, he makes them pompous, unsympathetic, and often stupid. He refers to the educated, in a letter to his family, from Giessen, in February, 1834, as "eine grosse Zahl, die, im Besitz einer lächerlichen Ausserlichkeit, die man Bildung, oder eines toten Krams, den man Gelehrsamkeit heisst, die grosse Masse ihrer Brüder ihrem

verachtenden Egoismus opfern" (Werke, p. 378). It is precisely this superficiality that Büchner demonstrates and satirises in King Peter, the Captain and the Doctor. This point will be dealt with later more fully, but it should be noted that, within the context of society as a whole, Büchner's portrayals ridicule the sense of superiority of these people in the social hierarchy.

Sexual morality is an issue which Büchner emphasises and compares in all social groups, and is often an issue which consciously divides them. In Woyzeck, this is clearly a sphere connected with the Church's teaching, and also with the moral code of a cultivated society. The Captain condemns Woyzeck for his illegitimate child--his lack of "virtue" prevents Woyzeck from being "ein guter Mensch" (Werke, p. 152). The empty loveless morality of this viewpoint is countered by Woyzeck with an honest reply: "wir gemeine Leut, das hat keine Tugend, es kommt einem nur so die Natur" (Werke, p. 152). Amongst her own kind, Marie, too, is ostracised for her immorality. Margret, a neighbour, questions the dubious status of the unmarried mother, with an arrogant remark: "Ich bin eine honette Person" (Werke, p. 154). Even in the lower class, the norm which the educated have established is here applied without question.

The sham morality of the time is satirised by Valerio in the last scene of Leonce und Lena. Speaking of the two puppets, he says: "Sie haben ein feines sittliches Gefühl, denn die Dame hat gar kein Wort für den Begriff Beinkleider, und dem Herrn ist es rein unmöglich, hinter einem Frauenzimmer eine Treppe hinauf-oder vor ihm hinunterzugehen" (Werke, p. 144).

The most striking example of the relationship between money and morality is the kind of prostitution illustrated in Dantons Tod by Rosalie, Adelaide and Simon's daughter, whose mother comments to her irate husband: "hättest du nur ein paar Hosen hinaufzuziehen, wenn die jungen Herren die Hosen nicht bei ihr hinunterliessen? Du Branntweinfass, willst du verdursten, wenn das Brunnlein zu laufen aufhört, he?--Wir arbeiten mit allen Gliedern, warum denn nicht auch damit; ihre Mutter hat damit geschafft, wie sie zur Welt kam, und es hat ihr weh getan; kann sie für ihre Mutter nicht auch damit schaffen, he? und tut's ihr auch weh dabei, he? Du Dummkopf!"

(Werke, p. 14). The accusing tone is again unmistakable. Büchner indicates here the twofold corruption of the people by the members of the higher class, who reduce the people to poverty by material exploitation, and then reduce them further by spiritual exploitation. The indictment is reiterated more clearly in the next words of the citizen: "wenn ihr von eurem gestohlenen Eigentum ein paar Heller wiederhaben wollt, müsst ihr huren und betteln" (Werke, p. 14). The lascivious, and often callous, behaviour of the crowd, demonstrated so harshly in the words and attitudes of the women watching the execution of their former leaders (Werke, p. 75 and p. 80), is thus justified to some extent. As in Woyzeck, the behaviour and attitudes of the lower class are spoilt by the tensions between the rich and poor.

The words of the mother also reveal the differences between the standard concept of morality, which is proclaimed by men like Robespierre, and imitated by naive and zealous follow-

ers like Simon, and the morality of the people as expressed by Simon's wife. She is inclined to regard sex merely as more work, and another form of income. The same attitude is echoed by Rosalie and Adelaide, who strike the same themes of hunger and pain (Werke, p. 38).

Though there is no extant plan or indication in any detail of how Büchner planned the new society, the implications in his writing are significant. He sees the republic as the ideal state for the contemporary conditions, a state which would accommodate the largest and healthiest class. The theme is expounded at the beginning of the Landbote, in Büchner's definition of "state" and recurs in Camille's remark in the first scene of Dantons Tod: "Die Staatsform muss ein durchsichtiges Gewand sein, das sich dicht an den Leib des Volkes schmiegt" (Werke, p. 11). Camille's remark remains a vague, and rather shallow, theory, however. In a letter to his family, from Zurich, dated November 20, 1836, Büchner's description of republican Switzerland is revealing: "Die Strassen laufen hier nicht voll Soldaten, Akzessisten und faulen Staatsdienern, man riskiert nicht, von einer adligen Kutsche überfahren zu werden; dafür überall ein gesundes, kräftiges Volk und um wenig Geld eine einfache, gute, rein republikanische Regierung, die sich durch ein Vermögenssteuer erhält" (Werke, p. 420).

It is clear from his portrayal of society and its problems, and from his observations of conditions in Hesse, that Büchner depended only on the people for change and for fresh hope. The people, however, were not to live up to his expect-

tations in his own attempt at political reform, and their problematical nature was to become a matter of close concern to Büchner, and complicate his hopes for progress. This problem of change and revolution, and the attitudes of the two classes to revolution will now be examined in greater detail, with reference to Büchner's drama about revolution, Dantons Tod.

C. Revolution and social change

Within the rigid social system described above, Büchner saw a revolutionary movement prepared to use violence as the only means which could bring about the desired change. Büchner turned to the problem of revolution and progress in two spheres. The first of these was his personal involvement in the Hesse conspiracy of 1833, during which he wrote Der Hessische Landbote; and later in Dantons Tod, he examined, among other spiritual problems of human society, the nature of revolution.

The two works reveal different attitudes, however. Before he wrote the Hessische Landbote, Büchner had been strongly in favour of the use of force to bring about change, provided the circumstances were right. Dantons Tod, on the other hand, speaks against violence. Here in fact, the whole concept has become negative; for neither the bourgeois leaders nor the people can use it profitably.

What is common to both, however, is Büchner's awareness of the people as the instigators and executors of change. In the Landbote, he reminds the people of their rights and of their potential power to oppose the ruling minority. In Dan-

Dantons Tod, he shows the Revolution going wrong, largely because the interests of the people in material improvement and emancipation are not served whole-heartedly by the bourgeois politicians. This divergence of aims between the people and the revolutionaries is reminiscent of Büchner's animosity towards the bourgeois Liberals in the Hesse conspiracy. Both in Hesse, and in Büchner's depiction of the French Revolution in Dantons Tod, the only real bond between the people and their bourgeois leaders was hatred of their common enemy, the ruling aristocracy.

Büchner's own interpretations of the French Revolution, in the Hessische Landbote and in Dantons Tod, are not strictly historical ones. In the Landbote, he simplifies the developments of 1789 and after, in order to glorify the break with the old unjust system, and the subsequent enlightenment of the people. In this interpretation of the Revolution, he is obviously concerned with inciting the masses to a similar revolt. Consequently, the Revolution is exalted as the bringer of the new social equality. Dantons Tod was written after the complete failure of the Hesse conspiracy, and this failure perhaps accounts for the drama's air of disillusionment with the Revolution and also with the revolutionaries involved. This antipathy towards his fellow revolutionaries was noted earlier. His scepticism towards them was probably intensified by his encounters with emigrant revolutionaries in Strasbourg after his flight. Büchner's letter to his brother, of July, 1835, indicates such antipathy (Werke, p. 396). There are, too, other references to the hopelessness of the activities of his contemporary revolutionaries: "Die ganze Revolution hat sich

schon in Liberale und Absolutisten geteilt und muss von der ungebildeten und armen Klasse aufgefressen werden" (Werke, p. 396). In both interpretations, Büchner oversimplifies the historical process of the French Revolution to give stress to the political position of the people, rather than the higher class.

Büchner examines the Revolution and its problems from three different perspectives. He depicts in Danton the bourgeois revolutionary who has lost his ideals. Robespierre, too, is portrayed as a bourgeois revolutionary; but he has adhered blindly to his ideals, which are theoretically pure, yet miserably impractical. Tools of these leaders, the common people portrayed by Büchner in the drama represent his third perspective on the Revolution. They are distinct from their leaders in their needs, in their inarticulateness and in their defencelessness. Yet these neglected people had been the main incentive for the Revolution and for the activities of their leaders. The fact that these bourgeois Revolutionaries no longer serve the people implies that once the common enemy had been defeated, the goals of the people and of the leaders were quite separate. In Büchner's view, as we have seen, it is primarily the people who must determine the development of their society, if that society is to function properly. In Dantons Tod, the people cannot shape the course of the revolutionary changes, because they have no leaders who are sincerely committed to their cause. Hence the new society in Dantons Tod fails.

The plot of Dantons Tod centres on the tension between the inertness of Danton and the revolutionary zeal of Robespierre. Büchner indicates that in the beginning they had shared the same eagerness for involvement in the Revolution. By demonstrating the change in Danton's motivation and attitudes, and by contrasting him with Robespierre, Büchner suggests that the failure of the Revolution is due largely to the lack of suitable leadership for the people. Yet it must be stated also that the people lack a genuine and critical interest in their leaders; their folly is, too, partly at fault.

Originally, Danton had shown all the potential qualities of a great revolutionary leader. He indicates at the beginning of the drama his first reasons for joining the Revolution. He had been repulsed by the old system, and he wanted change, like the people: "Ich konnte dergleichen gespreizte Katonen nie ansehen, ohne ihnen einen Tritt zu geben" (Werke, p. 12). This desire for change had united him in spirit with the people, especially as his good qualities include a grandeur in figure and an ability to communicate with the masses, which is still apparent even now: "er duzte sich mit den Ohnehosen, die Grisetten liefen hinter seinen Waden drein, und die Leute blieben stehen und zischelten sich in die Ohren, was er gesagt hatte" (Werke, p. 31). He had been dynamic enough to gather round him a group of supporters from his own social class, who respect and follow him even into death. He is also a man of great astuteness--it is ironic that of all the leaders, Danton is alone in recognising precisely what the people want from the Revolution: "Ihr wollt Brot, und sie werfen euch

Köpfe hin!" (Werke, p. 69). The people had most to gain in having Danton as a leader. Robespierre cannot appreciate the primary need of the people: food. He does, however, perceive their need to be led, in order that progress may take place. And he, unlike Danton, is active at the crucial stage of developments.

Danton had been, then, and still is capable of being, a great revolutionary figure, but now he clearly regards further revolutionary action as worthless. The astuteness he possesses acts against him and has changed him into the figure we see at the beginning of the drama. The change is apparent in the first scene, which discloses in him strange qualities for a leader of a people. Cynicism, loneliness, preoccupation with death and antipathy towards politics are all attitudes which are revealed here and which are further developed as the drama progresses. What separates Danton from Robespierre, the other leaders, and from the people for whom he had fought, is his brutal honesty and perceptiveness about all things. He had become aware of the failure of the Revolution, the would-be bringer of the new social state, and of the unreliability and helplessness of the people, those who ostensibly wanted and needed the change most. Ironically, he had come to this awareness while fighting in the Revolution and for the people, and it had turned him away from the people and their aims. At this point in the Revolution he ceases to lead the people, and to attempt further changes. His inactivity at this point, however reasonable, implies that he is not committed absolutely

to the cause of the people. He is prepared to become completely passive, because, looking back on the lack of progress in the Revolution, he can see only the futility of his own planning: "Wir haben nicht die Revolution, sondern die Revolution hat uns gemacht" (Werke, p. 35). His attitude also explains why he refuses to plan further action in the first scene. When called on by his party for some enthusiasm for the organisation of the new republic, he replies languidly: "O, es versteht sich alles von selbst. Wer soll denn all die schönen Dinge ins Werk setzen?" (Werke, p. 12). Since his attitude has become so negative, he must cease to serve the Revolution and the people.

This is his basic attitude throughout the drama. There is, however, a way out of the stagnation for Danton: to unite with Robespierre, who had once shared his aims as a bourgeois leader. Robespierre's principle is one which has proved totally unsuccessful in the past: "wir haben nur wenige Köpfe zu treffen, und das Vaterland ist gerettet" (Werke, p. 48). Danton feels that this is no more than murder now, even though the destruction of the aristocrats for the benefit of the people is the most basic of revolutionary principles. He, personally, had seen such a principle fail miserably. His own steps in the direction of active violence in the September massacres had not brought greater security to any of the social groups, including his own, nor had it improved the lot of the people. The first point is substantiated by the fact that the tribunal Danton had created after the massacre to prevent more slaughtering condemns his own party to the

guillotine. The second point is everywhere substantiated by the bitter outcries of the starving people. Furthermore, Danton questions whether massacre, even of former aristocratic enemies, as Robespierre reminds him, is morally justified when progress cannot be ascertained. The September massacre is the focus of Danton's personal guilt and despair. It had been for him a sincere attempt to destroy the old regime, yet it had brought only guilt for him and no change in the status quo. All these issues, however valid they are, indicate that Danton has allowed his concern for the people to be first influenced, and then destroyed by his own personal interests. Egocentricity is one outstanding characteristic of Büchner's upper class characters, and it is the fault to which Danton falls prey.

For these reasons, Danton will not act with Robespierre. As an inactive revolutionary, however, he is alienated both from his fellow-fighters and from the people he served. In this Revolution, alienation and passivity can bring only disaster, as Lacroix recognises: "Für das Volk sind Schwäche und Mässigung eins; es schlägt die Nachzügler tot" (Werke, p. 27). There is throughout a certain distance between the people and Danton. He has assessed them accurately, and despises them for their cruelty and lack of discrimination: "das Volk ist wie ein Kind, es muss alles zerbrechen, um zu sehen, was darin steckt" (Werke, p. 27). This distance is increased in the drama to the point where Danton feels no personal commitment to them, even though he knows that their reaction will be violence. For the people are still eager for change in their

material conditions, which they think the guillotine will bring by destroying the old rule, either of the aristocrats, or of the Danton party.

At the same time as Danton becomes alienated from the people because of his passivity, another more personal alienation between them takes place: Danton is envied because of his material well-being. All the leaders are aware of the importance of the people's support in any new revolutionary step. They know, too, that popular support is dependent on the material circumstances of the people. Danton expresses this dependence bitterly, when assessing his own position: "Es hasst die Geniessenden wie ein Eunuch die Männer" (Werke, p. 27). Jealousy of Danton's lascivious and extravagant life finally sways the crowd to support of Robespierre. Because of his position, Danton can indulge in the sensual pleasures to which he is drawn. The indulgence is the final factor alienating him from the masses, since they associate it with the former enemy, the aristocracy. Someone cries: "Danton hat schöne Kleider, Danton hat ein schönes Haus . . . --Danton war arm wie ihr. Woher hat er das alles?" (Werke, pp. 69-70). Danton's alienation then becomes complete and he must die.

Danton is a disillusioned revolutionary for many reasons, most of which reflect his egocentricity. His actions were perhaps too much influenced by spiritual or psychological motives, and not enough by single-minded concern for the people, who must be the sole drive behind a revolution. Danton's dis-

gust for pain, for example, coupled with his suffering after the September massacre, could explain his refusal to do further guillotining. He himself admits to a philosophical motive for escaping into the "peace" of activity, like other characters of Büchner: "Ich wollte mir's bequem machen. Ich habe es erreicht; die Revolution setzt mich in Ruhe, aber auf andere Weise, als ich dachte" (Werke, p. 34). His outlook has all the egocentricity Büchner ascribes to the upper class, and he cannot fully identify himself with the cause of the people, whom he has grown to despise. Such contempt is in itself an alienating factor. Lukacs calls Danton "ein grosser bürgerlicher Revolutionär, der aber in keiner Hinsicht über die bürgerlichen Ziele der Revolution hinauszugehen vermag."¹³ The same point is made by Fritz Werner, in a historical analysis of Büchner's drama, which, however, takes in wider historical issues: "Danton, der scheiternde Revolutionär, ist Büchner selbst und mit ihm die geistige Schicht des deutschen Bürgertums."¹⁴ This interpretation wrongly identifies Büchner and Danton as political personalities. As Lukacs indicates in his analysis, Büchner's political sympathy is divided amongst the chief protagonists.

The people certainly cannot be expected to share the hopes of the Danton party for the future society, as Camille expresses them: "Wir wollen nackte Götter, Bacchantinnen, olympische Spiele, und von melodischen Lippen" (Werke, pp. 11-12). The plans of both political parties reflect an egocentric desire for a society which will please them. It is unimportant which of the two offers a better solution: neither

offers anything worthwhile for the people in the new society.

Danton's estrangement from the people is justifiable and explicable. The fact that he suffers greatly amidst all the spiritual turmoil he so sincerely feels makes him a very sympathetic figure. As a revolutionary, though, he cannot offer an alternative to the bloodshed he detests so much, and he dies a passive death without seriously trying to improve the predicament. He becomes introverted rather than socially aware; and he falls prey to ailments associated by Büchner with an anti-social class. From a strictly social standpoint, Danton, however justifiable his behaviour, is culpable.

If Danton offers no answer to the problem posed by this Revolution, Robespierre offers a questionable one. He maintains the vigour and drive of revolutionary fervour against the passive, exhausted Danton. Not sharing Danton's insight into the weakness of the Revolution, he can maintain his enthusiasm and sense of purpose. His vigour is responsible for his victory, and for what he thinks is progress to the new society, but against the background of pessimism exhibited by the record of the Revolution, his optimistic vigour is not laudable. Certainly when it is considered that his way to this new society is based on slaughter which seems difficult to justify, on perjury and on suppression, and embodies such frightening contradictions as "der Despotismus der Freiheit gegen die Tyrannei" (Werke, p. 19), the nature of such leadership becomes questionable. Though Robespierre leads the people when they need guidance, he is not a suitable leader, as we shall see. Some of his policies, like the one mentioned here,

would lead to a dictatorship where all society would be subject to suppression as bad as that which the people had tried to destroy. Robespierre's preoccupation is with the political reorganisation of the revolutionary government based on the concept and application of virtue. He has no real insight into the socio-economic needs of the people, which Büchner had stressed in his own political activities as the sole basis for a peaceful and worthy society, and which Danton perceives throughout the drama.

Robespierre's blindness is the chief factor making his position as a revolutionary leader and prophet dubious. Danton's honesty offers a more realistic awareness of revolution and those involved than Robespierre's narrow idealism. Robespierre is incapable of discerning the lack of progress in the development of events, and thinks that any means will justify the "last" step to the new society. He can therefore continue the same policy which had set the Revolution in motion, and of which Danton despairs. His theory is close to Büchner's, for within it the people are exalted above the aristocrats, the old regime: "Die gute Gesellschaft ist noch nicht tot, die gesunde Volkskraft muss sich an die Stelle dieser nach allen Richtungen abgekitzelten Klasse setzen" (Werke, p. 28). It remains theory, however. Looking at the people as they are portrayed here in the drama, Danton's comments about them seem wiser and more honest than Robespierre's blind belief in their innate goodness. Ironically, Robespierre, in his first appearance with the people, finds them in an ugly mood of anarchy, violence and drunkenness. They immediately allow themselves

to be subdued and manipulated by his flattery: his words, "armes tugendhaftes Volk" and "Volk, du bist gross" (Werke, p. 16), only show both their blindness and his, for Büchner is far from idealising the people.

Like Danton, Robespierre, too, is distant from the people, though in a different way. The people hail Robespierre as a hero, but they do not share any fundamental emotions or attitudes with him. He cannot communicate with the people except as their idol, with promises of the new society. One main issue dividing him from the people is their desire for material improvement, a desire which he cannot appreciate. His stress on virtue as a philosophy of life is similarly totally removed from the experiences and outlook of the people.

Robespierre resembles Danton in another fundamental way. He, too, is motivated by subjective reasons, though he barely admits it. His personal driving force is responsible for forming, and sometimes distorting, his political opinions. In this sense, he is no purer a revolutionary than Danton. Robespierre is obsessed with the idea of virtue, which he attempts to project onto the Revolution: "Die Kraft der Republik ist die Tugend. . . . Der Schrecken ist ein Ausfluss der Tugend" (Werke, p. 19). He, then, too approaches the Revolution from an egocentric standpoint, without having the wider interests of the people and of the whole society at heart. His concept of virtue influences his thinking towards all those involved in the Revolution. He plans on further massacre of the aristocrats, ostensibly for political reasons; but he always refers to them in terms which stress the extra-

vagant life they had led rather than the harmful position they had held in society. His opposition to Danton, too, is prompted partly by jealousy, and partly by indignation at his luxurious and lecherous living. It is demonstrated throughout that his idealising of the people is always in the context of their virtuousness. What he does not see is that this virtuous living is not natural to the people, but the result of poverty, as Lacroix points out: "das Volk ist tugendhaft, d.h. es genießt nicht, weil ihm die Arbeit die Genussorgane stumpf macht, es besäuft sich nicht, weil es kein Geld hat" (Werke, p. 27). Even a partisan of Robespierre comments on his subjectivity: "Robespierre will aus der Revolution einen Hörsaal für Moral machen" (Werke, p. 64). This obsession with virtue is almost religious in its fervour--he is referred to by the people as the Messiah. This is an indication of their enthusiastic response to a shallow fanaticism, and of one of the few real bonds between Robespierre and the people. Büchner indicates here, too, the people's vulnerability, whenever the religious element comes into play.

It is significant that Robespierre is identified with the people solely because of his hatred of Danton, which is matched by the people's jealousy of this leader. They support Robespierre only in this, and even then, their support wavers. There can be no real identification, because Robespierre nowhere states that the people must be helped materially; yet material well-being was the main aim of the people, and of Büchner for the people. Robespierre's inhumanity is one of his most unsympathetic traits. Lukacs, in his evaluation of

the two leaders, makes Robespierre the political hero, as the only leader prepared to go on with the Revolution, but even he points out Robespierre's shortcomings.¹⁵ Depicting his lack of love is Büchner's main way of castigating Robespierre as an unsuitable leader to further the cause of humanity--Büchner's chief criterion for the new society.

Büchner devotes much detail to portraying the people, for they are the main factor in the development of the Revolution. Their position had not been helped at all by the course of events, yet, ironically, they had the most to gain. The dramatist gives a fairly faithful representation of the conditions of the time, stressing material want as the main lever, as it had been in the Hesse conspiracy, and in the whole of Büchner's political outlook. The people in the drama, like the Hesse peasants, are characterised by oppression. In the old regime the people had been starved into submissiveness, so that after the overthrow of power, they were most susceptible to any pressure affecting their material situation. Their material situation, however, had not improved, even after the overthrow. Büchner everywhere points to the material suffering of the people, and the crucial role it plays in a revolution. He writes to Gutzkow: "Und die grosse Klasse selbst? Für sie gibt es nur zwei Hebel: materielles Elend und religiöser Fanatismus" (Werke, p. 412). This remark finds an echo in the drama (one of many echoes between the work and the private writings, suggesting that Büchner's views on the subject remained fairly consistent) when Lacroix says: "das Volk ist materiell elend, das ist ein furchtbarer Hebel" (Werke, p. 26).

The people become prey to Robespierre, who exploits their suffering to win support against Danton. They themselves express this suffering much more bitterly, and with complete justification: "Sie haben uns gesagt: schlagt die Aristokraten tot, das sind Wölfe! Wir haben die Aristokraten an die Laternen gehängt. Sie haben gesagt: das Veto frisst euer Brot; wir haben das Veto totgeschlagen. . . . Aber sie haben die Toten ausgezogen, und wir laufen wie zuvor auf nackten Beinen und frieren" (Werke, pp. 14-15). As Danton had seen, the Revolution had brought no progress for the people.

Material hardship explains and partly justifies the reactions of the crowd in the drama. The people are not the heroes, the glorification of the Revolution, as might be expected. Robespierre's contention that the people are to be the nucleus of the great new society certainly gives rise to doubts, when the behaviour of the lower class in this drama is considered. Though the people are poor and hungry and their actions are largely determined by this poverty, they are in some respects contemptible. Büchner did not idealise any of his characters, because he personally felt that man had an innate propensity to moral frailty. This feeling he discusses freely in a letter to his fiancée, from Giessen, probably in November, 1833. It was in fact the French Revolution which had prompted this feeling in him, for he saw in it man at his worst, and yet he saw the typical man, who was characterised by this frailty. No social class is left untouched by it, including the lower class. It would then seem that his social ideas formulate the best possible solution to protect man from his own weaknesses.

The deprived people in Dantons Tod are far from ideal. Simon, for example, is seen in the first crowd scene of the play beating his wife in a drunken fury, and living on the earnings of his daughter, who has become a prostitute to feed the family. Later, he ironically appears as a soldier of the Republic, arresting Danton and shouting nobly: "Der Freiheit eine Gasse!--Sorgt für mein Weib!" (Werke, p. 45). The first scene shows, again in an ironic light, the general tendency of the people towards anarchy and ill-judgment, and sets a general tone for the appearance of the people. They are depicted as blind and stupid. Billaud comments: "Das Volk hat einen Instinkt, sich treten zu lassen" (Werke, p. 62). Simultaneously duped by Robespierre's flattery and attracted to Danton's personality, the people are easily swayed between the two by play on their poverty. They are also callous and needlessly cruel. This cruelty is partly to satisfy negatively the unfulfilled desire for better conditions, like the woman who cries: "Platz! Die Kinder schreien, sie haben Hunger. Ich muss sie zusehen machen, dass sie still sind" (Werke, p. 80). But they do enjoy such cruelty. Fouquier comments on the trial and execution: "Es ist ein pikantes Gericht. Das Volk braucht dergleichen" (Werke, p. 55). This is the attitude predominating in the last scenes, in which the crowd obviously enjoys the execution.

The people are the focus of the conflict which disturbs Büchner in his private life. He, the revolutionaries in the drama and the people want change, yet none can achieve it.

For the people, the situation is especially problematical. They are the ones who need and desire change most, yet the conditions created by the old class system are themselves barriers to change. This situation was demonstrated in Hesse, and in Büchner's dramatic depiction of the Revolution. Büchner's attitude to the people is characterised by love and despair. Politically, despair predominates.

Büchner's despairing of the possibility of political emancipation for the lower class at that time emerges from his presentation of all the figures in Dantons Tod, where man appears incapable of improving his lot in society. All means of achieving change have proved ineffectual in the drama. The people fight with force, the only means at their disposal, and the bourgeois revolutionaries, who are alone capable of comprehending the development of society in abstract terms, use both their intellectual powers and force. All these attempts come to nothing.

We have seen, in this study of the Revolution in Dantons Tod, how the classes were motivated by different aims, which were felt to be quite separate. The implication is that the animosity between classes, which Büchner observed, and which we shall see extended into spheres other than the social and political, also retarded the improvement of society, even when there was a general desire for improvement.

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS IN SOCIETY

All Büchner's characters, regardless of their social position and personal qualities, live in a world filled with pain. His four creative works all deal in some measure with pain, which Benno von Wiese calls "ein unauflösbares Grundphänomen der menschlichen Existenz."¹ Büchner was very much aware of universal phenomena affecting the whole of mankind: among these phenomena are the concepts of determinism, of the necessity of evil, of general lack of progress in the development of man, and of the inevitability of pain and suffering.

Material suffering, one form of pain to which man is subjected, has already been discussed in chapter I. Material suffering is characteristic of the fate of the lower class and is the result of a social system both unnatural and unfair; that is, it is imposed on man by man. The more fundamental form of suffering in his works, that of the spirit, affects men, whatever their particular circumstances. There are, however, distinct differences in the types of spiritual suffering in society.

The members of the educated higher class suffer in a manner which reflects their egocentricity. The spiritual refinements of their culture serve only to increase their awareness of the self, and this self-awareness then leads to great

and unhealthy introversion, appearing either as the decadence of Dantons Tod and parts of Leonce und Lena, or as the comic, trivial ruminating of the Captain in Woyzeck and King Peter in Leonce und Lena.

An examination of the nature of the suffering in the poor and uneducated class will reveal a different attitude. The poor, the least civilised members of society, have an intuitive and natural awareness of man's existential suffering, which contrasts sharply with the intellectual introspection of their "superiors." It is chiefly through this contrast in outlook that Büchner succeeds in demonstrating the potential healthiness of the lower class: though the people are debased by their material situation, and though they are helpless, often stupid and sometimes mentally sick, they are free from all the egocentric torments to which the representatives of the higher class subject themselves. The reason why Büchner turned to the people for fresh hope for man's society thus becomes clear. The attack on the spiritual activities of society complements his attack on the material injustice in it; both attacks point to social unhealthiness, and the people, those who are not involved in creating and influencing society's values, become the sole agents ever capable of changing it.

A. The spiritual problems of the higher social class

Büchner's attack on the spiritual life of the higher social groups is twofold: in Dantons Tod he criticises particularly the spiritual and moral decadence into which Danton and other characters have fallen; whereas in Woyzeck, the complete lack of any real spiritual and humane values is revealed.

There are some points of contact between the two targets of criticism, because both are caused by excessive cultivation of the mind, and both display the insecurity of a sick society.

1. Spiritual decadence

The theme and atmosphere of spiritual decadence is an integral part of Dantons Tod, contributing to the sense of hopelessness which surrounds the Revolution, and characterising especially those revolutionaries who are furthest removed from its problems. They are not only concerned, but obsessed, with the concept of a cosmos which generates an all-embracing form of suffering. Payne, as the most refined intellectual character of Büchner, expresses the idea philosophically: "Merke dir, Anaxagoras: warum leide ich? Das ist der Fels des Atheismus. Das leiseste Zucken des Schmerzes, und rege es sich nur in einem Atom, macht einen Riss in der Schöpfung von oben bis unten" (Werke, p. 53). It is significant to note that in this scene, Büchner treats Payne and his hearers ironically: their language is convoluted; the neat tabulation of ideas suggests sophistry; and there is a certain mechanical tone in Payne's words which is made comic by Chaumette's relieved reply: "Ei, wahrhaftig, das gibt mir wieder Licht; ich danke, danke!" (Werke, p. 51). The implication of Büchner's treatment is that philosophy, accepted as one of the highest manifestations of a cultural society, is partly responsible for an overrefined awareness of spiritual phenomena. Over-refinement then leads to the neurosis which Büchner portrays as rife in the upper class characters of his dramas.

Danton, who is himself spiritually refined to a dis-

turbing degree, strikes the same theme of universal malaise surrounding mankind: "Aber wir sind die armen Musikanten und unsere Körper die Instrumente. Sind denn die hässlichen Töne . . . nur da, um höher und höher dringend und endlich leise verhallend wie ein wollüstiger Hauch in himmlischen Ohren zu sterben?" (Werke, p. 78). It is interesting to note that very similar words occur in one of Büchner's letters to his fiancée, from Giessen, in early March, 1834 (Werke, p. 379). In this letter, however, he is describing his feelings during a sickness, when he had been close to death. The theme is not found again in his letters, and no trace remains in Büchner's outlook as revealed in them. The connection, however, between this attitude and death (Danton's words, too, are spoken on the eve of his death) underlines the inherent neurosis in Danton's awareness.

It is not the awareness of suffering itself, however, which Büchner criticises as a spiritual weakness, but the preoccupation with it. The prison scenes in Dantons Tod illustrate how much each individual is obsessed with the pain of the universe. Characters talk past each other, reiterating their agony by means of extravagant imagery: "Die Welt ist der Ewige Jude, das Nichts ist der Tod . . .;" "Wir sind alle lebendig begraben . . ." (Werke, p. 67).

The members of the higher class are keenly aware of their being the focus of universal suffering. Herein, they display an egocentricity which is also typical of the social institutions they create. Their obsession with themselves and their own suffering, develops into the decadent atmosphere

which Büchner portrays in the whole of cultured society. He is not dealing with isolated problems: the main figures from the educated class all become distorted in some measure by excessive awareness of themselves.

Leonce looks at the world as a mirror, reflecting himself and dependent on him: "Ich wage kaum die Hände auszustrecken, wie in einem engen Spiegelzimmer, aus Furcht, überall anzustossen, dass die schönen Figuren in Scherben auf dem Boden lägen und ich vor der kahlen nackten Wand stünde" (Werke, p. 130). His father shares this self-centred outlook, though his attitude is treated comically: "Der Mensch muss denken Wenn ich so laut rede, so weiss ich nicht, wer es eigentlich ist, ich oder ein anderer; das ängstigt mich. . . . Ich bin ich" (Werke, p. 119).

Danton suffers in a similar way (called "Ich-Gespaltetheit" by Bergemann in the Werke, p. 653), envisaging the disintegration of his own body and personality: "Und soll ich nicht zittern, wenn so die Wände plaudern? Wenn mein Leib so zerschellt ist, dass meine Gedanken unstet, umirrend mit den Lippen der Steine reden?" (Werke, p. 43). Only when his wife calls his name, a reminder of his complete personality, does he regain normal consciousness and control.

With this degree of egocentricity, it is hardly surprising that these figures should see the universe as threatening and hostile to themselves. Danton's fear of death prompts the thought: "Der verfluchte Satz: Etwas kann nicht zu nichts werden! Und ich bin etwas, das ist der Jammer!--Die Schöpfung hat sich so breit gemacht, da ist nichts leer, alles voll Gewimmels. Das Nichts hat sich ermordet, die Schöpfung ist

seine Wunde, wir sind die Blutstropfen, die Welt ist das Grab, worin es fault" (Werke, pp. 66-67). In Dantons Tod, even a minor character (significantly, an aristocrat, from the highest of what Büchner feels to be the dead social groups) voices a similar thought: "Ja, die Erde ist eine dünne Kruste; ich meine immer, ich könnte durchfallen, wo ein Loch ist" (Werke, p. 39). The ideas of Payne and Camille are similar in content, so that in the drama, the whole theme of neurosis is built up by representatives from the higher class.

Another form of neurosis, which is part of this extreme awareness of the self, is the sense of isolation which plagues Danton and Leonce. In the case of Danton, the sense of isolation becomes so great that it interferes with his normal relationships, even in his feelings towards his wife, one person who should be close to him: "Wir wissen wenig voneinander. Wir sind Dickhäuter, wir strecken die Hände nacheinander aus, aber es ist vergebliche Mühe, wir reiben nur das grobe Leder aneinander ab,--wir sind sehr einsam" (Werke, p. 9). Danton tries to gain contact, to overcome his isolation, in sexual activities, but this attempt also fails, and he is left feeling excluded from Marion, the prostitute: "Warum kann ich deine Schönheit nicht ganz in mich fassen, sie nicht ganz umschliessen?" (Werke, p. 24).

Whereas Danton's sense of loneliness results in cynicism, Leonce's isolation fills him with horror and despair: "Mein Leben gähnt mich an wie ein grosser weisser Bogen Papier, den ich vollschreiben soll, aber ich bringe keinen Buchstaben heraus" (Werke, p. 123). His expressions of loneli-

ness again imply the "Ich-Gespaltenheit" referred to earlier. Leonce also differs from Danton in that he is alone and finds no companions amongst the despicable members of the court. In both figures, however, the isolation is a barrier to communication and to social behaviour in general.

A main theme in Büchner's works, and one which is restricted to the representatives of the educated class, is an unhealthy and uneasy attitude to time. These are the members of society who have the opportunity, and the necessary articulation to examine the nature of time, just as they have the skill to think about abstract concepts like the universe. In both cases, neurosis results from their educational advantage. In comparison to the lower class, they have, too, more leisure with, Büchner implies, little to do that is worthwhile--except to think about themselves. Consequently, they fall prey in most cases to boredom, which they then project onto the rest of the universe.

Leonce sees boredom as the negative factor in stimulating human life, because in his own life he has nothing useful to do: "Es krassiert ein entsetzlicher Müssiggang.-- Müssiggang ist aller Laster Anfang.--Was die Leute nicht alles aus Langeweile treiben! Sie studieren aus Langeweile, sie beten aus Langeweile, sie verlieben, verheiraten und vermehren sich aus Langeweile und sterben endlich aus Langeweile" (Werke, p. 116). These are not merely the idle words of an adolescent in a comedy--they are almost a verbatim echo of words of Lenz, who undergoes a very serious spiritual crisis. In the Novelle, the social context is not stressed, but here

Leonce is a prince, a future head of government, and his attitude is thus socially disturbing. Valerio also suggests this universal boredom by his statement that God created the world out of boredom (Werke, p. 145).

The concept and phrase "Totenuhr" occurs in this comedy as another aspect of the problem of time. The passing of time indicated by a clock serves only as a reminder of the futility of life: "Das Picken der Totenuhr in unserer Brust ist langsam, und jeder Tropfen Blut misst seine Zeit, und unser Leben ist ein schleichend Fieber" (Werke, p. 134). The image is repeated shortly after (Werke, p. 136) and is also expressed in a slightly different form by Danton (Werke, p. 72).

The characters suffering from an extreme awareness of time look on activity as an escape, a way of spending time, so that they need not think about the boredom of their existence. For Danton, anything is better than boredom, even suffering under oppression and material want, as in the case of the people: "kann man mehr verlangen, um gerührt, edel, tugendhaft oder witzig zu sein, oder um überhaupt keine Langeweile zu haben?" (Werke, p. 35). His whole existence is motivated by a desire to escape the futility and boredom which have become his life. Thus he sought peace in the Revolution; he also seeks the company of prostitutes to consume time. Eventually, seeing no progress in the Revolution, he becomes bored with this, too. At this stage, his attitude becomes morbid, for as he can see nothing new in his life to fill time, he turns to death as an alternative solution: "Es ist recht gut, dass die Lebenszeit ein wenig reduziert wird; der

Rock war zu lang, unsere Glieder konnten ihn nicht ausfüllen" (Werke, p. 36). He thinks that death will bring peace, that is, cessation of thinking, and will thereby offer an escape from the torture of awareness.

Activity as a means of consuming time is treated on less serious levels by Büchner in the figures of Peter and the Captain. King Peter is continually desperate for mental activity: "wir müssen denken, ungestört denken" (Werke, p. 146). Significantly, he is also mad, and cannot consider anything seriously, so that activity is worthless. His son expresses the same idea. He becomes terrified by thinking about himself, and immediately seeks a diversion: "wir müssen was treiben, was treiben! Wir wollen uns mit tiefen Gedanken abgeben" (Werke, p. 133). Büchner gives the impression that all activity among the higher class characters is worthless, even that of the more zealous partisans in Dantons Tod.

The Captain, in contrast to Peter, is quite conscious of the phenomenon of time and can, to some extent, articulate the misery it causes him: "Langsam, Woyzeck, langsam; eins nach dem andern! Er macht mir ganz schwindlig. Was soll ich dann mit den zehn Minuten anfangen, die Er heute zu früh fertig wird? . . . Was will Er denn, mit der ungeheuren Zeit all anfangen?" His comments are superficial, however, and end in foolishness: "Woyzeck, es schaudert mich, wenn ich denke, dass sich die Welt in einem Tag herumdreht! . . . ich kann kein Mühlrad mehr sehn, oder ich werd melancholisch" (Werke, p. 151). The Captain is continually compared and contrasted

with Woyzeck, who is always busy in a worthwhile way: he loves his family, and holds three jobs, in order to support them. The Captain has nothing to do and is consequently lazy, bored and very unhappy. As Wolfgang Martens has pointed out, these problems of the Captain concerning time and activity are not purely comic; his statements are, in themselves, serious, though they are ascribed to a ludicrous character: "Mit diesen Zügen rückt der Hauptmann in unvermutete Nähe zu anderen von neurotischer Unruhe befallenen Gestalten in Büchners Dichtung."² In this light, this particular distress in the Captain can be interpreted as a valid expression of the decadence also found in Dantons Tod and Leonce und Lena.

The lethargy demonstrated by the Captain is emphasised by Büchner's portrayal of his physique. He is fat and apoplectic, unhealthy in body as well as mind. Physical lethargy strikes all those characters suffering from an acute awareness of time: Danton, Leonce, Peter and the Captain are all, in their ways, contemplators who do not lead active lives. Danton and Leonce project their own feelings of boredom onto the world: thus, they sometimes regard any action as worthless, if done in the vacuum of such pointless boredom. They can vacillate, then, between a mental desire for diversion in activity, as we have seen, and a feeling that this is, in any case, worthless.

Büchner's reference to boredom and its consequence, in the letter to Gutzkow, from Strasbourg, in 1836, connects boredom quite definitely to the life of the higher class: "Das ganze Leben derselben besteht nur in Versuchen, sich die

entsetzlichste Langeweile zu vertreiben" (Werke, p. 412).

Lukacs, too, sees boredom as "den vorherrschenden Zug des satten Bürgertums."³ The emphasis placed by these figures on boredom as the underlying nature of life must ultimately negate human activity on any level, and especially social activity.

The morbid lethargy to which Danton and the Captain fall prey has already been shown to be the result of their obsession with the nature of time and boredom. Engrossment in death is one logical outcome of a feeling that a life filled with boredom is useless. Apart from Danton's complacency, even eagerness, towards death, Leonce's attitude must be considered. Just as Danton regards Julie as "das Grab" (Werke, p. 9), so Leonce connects Rosetta's love with death: "O, eine sterbende Liebe ist schöner als eine werdende. . . . Adio, adio, meine Liebe, ich will deine Leiche lieben" (Werke, p. 122). The subject of death is also introduced by Büchner as soon as Leonce experiences his most worthwhile emotion, his falling in love with Lena, and the absurdity is stressed by the juxtaposing of his declaration of love and his immediate decision to die, since he cannot bear the weight of such perfection. It may be significant that Leonce, a typically upper class character, is portrayed, within the limitations of comedy, as incapable of accepting the responsibility of emotion.

It must be added, with reference to Danton's morbid interest in death, that when actually faced with it, his attitude changes completely, and he speaks of life as something desirable and precious. Ironically only death, the ultimate threat to life, has the force to make him appreciate life.

In the last scene, too, death unites the revolutionaries in the only moment of real love and affection experienced by them in the drama. During their lifetime they, and especially Danton, had shared cynicism in varying degrees. Death, as the force superceding all human and social institutions and attitudes, brings out in them basic man, rather than social man, and binds them together.

2. Büchner's comic and satiric treatment of spiritual problems

In his comic treatment of the spiritual problems of the higher social class, in particular those presented by the Captain and the Doctor in Woyzeck, and Peter in Leonce und Lena, Büchner is attacking the same fundamental disorder in society, though it finds different form. The characters all demonstrate how the excessive refinement of the mind leads to a lack of balance in the whole personality. King Peter and the Captain are preoccupied with trivial brooding, and their subsequent suffering is shallow. The Doctor is a caricature of a rationalist thinker, who exalts the mind of man in ludicrous proportions, and who is, as a result, completely devoid of human feeling. In Woyzeck, Büchner's attack is also directed at the lack of humanity in Woyzeck's antagonists, and illustrates in this way the inadequacy of society's spiritual refinements to help mankind as a whole.

In the caricature figures of Peter and the Captain, philosophising is the cause of their shallow and trivial problems. Peter has obviously accumulated superficial aspects of philosophy which encourages man to think about his own

being. Peter's total lack of comprehension is evident in his confusion of terms and ideas as he dresses: "Begriffen? Ansich ist an sich, versteht ihr? Jetzt kommen meine Attribute, Modifikationen, Affektionen und Akzidenten: wo ist mein Hemd, meine Hose?--Halt, pfui! der freie Wille steht da vorn ganz offen. Wo ist die Moral: wo sind die Manschetten?" (Werke, p. 118). As in so many instances in Dantons Tod, Büchner shows the danger of philosophical introspection in the educated class. Here, introspection is combined with madness, making Büchner's criticism doubly harsh. Peter is a satire on the Fichtean idealist; he lives in his own self-created world, without contact with his real kingdom, which presents a new and different reality. Such a king is not only a political anachronism, but also a spiritual anachronism, and thus part of a decaying world.

The Captain is a half-comic demonstration of neurotic introversion. Peter, amidst his subservient advisors, lives in a world far removed from all the claims of reality, and can consequently pursue his quasi-philosophical studies happily. Excessive introversion in the Captain, however, has destroyed him and made him so egocentric that he is completely incapable of any social behaviour. Whereas Peter is contented with his existence, the Captain has become, through the same tendency to philosophise, problematical both to himself and to the outside world. His shallow learning prompts him only to self-pity: "ich bin so schwermütig, ich habe so was Schwärmerisches; ich muss immer weinen, wenn ich meinen Rock an der Wand hängen sehe" (Werke, p. 161).

In the Captain, the tendency to quasi-philosophical questioning and neurosis is connected with malice towards Woyzeck, a socially weaker person. He attacks Woyzeck on those levels he knows to be unfair--perhaps to inflate by contrast his own ego. Egoism is on the one hand inherently dangerous, producing people who are unfit to form a society; on the other hand, it can be directly anti-social, as in the case of the Captain.

Büchner uses one outward sign of the Captain's generally neurotic attitude with great comic effect. His constant thinking and introversion have made him a highly nervous man, completely vulnerable to any threat, and confused both by himself and others. His confusion emerges in his spasmodic language and constant uneasiness. He is, for instance, easily disturbed by Woyzeck: "Er macht mich ganz konfus mit seiner Antwort;" "Der Diskurs hat mich ganz angegriffen" (Werke, pp. 152-153). His confusion, spasmodic language, and especially his abnormal uneasiness, are all underlined by Büchner in the meeting of the two caricature figures, the Doctor and the Captain. Upon hearing the Doctor's crude diagnosis of his distress, the Captain falls into panic: "Herr Doktor, erschrecken Sie mich nicht! Es sind schon Leute am Schreck gestorben, am blossen hellen Schreck.--Ich sehe schon die Leute mit den Zitronen in den Händen; aber sie werden sagen, er war ein guter Mensch, ein guter Mensch" (Werke, p. 161).

The Captain's extreme fear of death, indicated here, is balanced by the Doctor's equally extreme attitude of callousness towards death and sickness. He is unmoved by the

Captain's malady and fears, for instance, but as this comic self-centred figure does not demand sympathy or respect, the Doctor's attitude is not grave. Face to face with Woyzeck, however, now seriously ill from shock and weakness, his reaction appears completely inhuman. He shows a cruel disinterest, together with a concern for scientific analysis: "Ei, ei! Schön, Woyzeck! (Reibt sich die Hände) . . . bemerken Sie die Wirkung, fühlen Sie einmal: was ungleicher Puls! Der und die Augen! . . . soll ich dir die Ohren bewegen? . . . So, meine Herren! Das sind so Übergänge zum Esel, häufig auch die Folge weiblicher Erziehung und die Muttersprache" (Werke, pp. 167-168). The Doctor's attitude is bitterly ironic: as a physician, he should be a humane man, but his fellow-men, living or dying, are to him nothing more than interesting cases. It is also significant that his learning is "hopelessly tied to German idealist philosophy;"⁴ yet again the inadequacy of cultural activities to improve man's sense of humanity is suggested. Especially significant in this respect are his words: "Behüte, wer wird sich über einen Menschen ärgern, ein' Menschen! Wenn es noch ein Proteus wäre, der einem krepieret!" (Werke, p. 159).

In the characters both of the Doctor and the Captain, the absurd is combined with grotesque elements. The social implication of this aspect of their character is stressed by Lindenberger: they are "the only representatives in the drama of the ruling class which is oppressing Woyzeck. By portraying them in grotesque terms, Büchner is able to demon-

strate both the absurdity and the horror of their world at the same time."⁵ So great is Büchner's hatred of them as human beings that he does not even grant them personal names, but makes them shallow, nameless caricatures of their castes and professions.

Neurosis, boredom and morbidness are all connected spiritual traits amongst the higher social groups. All are characteristic of the educated, who are solely benefiting from society and its institutions. Education has given them not a better ability to enjoy life, but an over-sensitive awareness which has spoilt them as human beings. Neither education, nor philosophy, nor a search for a moral code are attacked intrinsically by Büchner: these spheres are attacked because they characterise the oppressing class. He refers to education as "einer lächerlichen Äusserlichkeit" (Werke, p. 378), for in the power of the upper class, it has become distorted, just as social organisation has been distorted. The spiritual values and attributes of society are portrayed as empty and pointless. Furthermore, they intensify the division of the classes by aggravating the great self-awareness of the higher class, and the egocentricity which is already apparent in the basic principles of the class society as Büchner portrays it.

B. The lower class

We have seen how, amongst the higher groups in society, neurosis is rife, a neurosis stemming from a hyper-sensitive awareness of man and his precarious universe. The lower class figures, as part of mankind, are just as vulnerable to the

threats of the universe--but their reaction is vastly different. Their suffering is fundamental and genuine, whereas the representatives from the higher class are plagued by essentially self-made problems, or problems which are at least intensified by their own introversion.

There are two main examples of the awareness of suffering amongst the lower class--the visions of Woyzeck and the fairy-tale of the Grandmother. Both examples deal with the same problematical condition which disturbs Danton: the hostility of the universe into which man is born. Woyzeck's mental disorders represent the forces of chaos and suffering in the world, surrounding and threatening man through the phenomena of nature: "Es geht hinter mir, unter mir. . . .
 "Über der Stadt is alles Glut! Ein Feuer fährt um den Himmel und ein Getös herunter wie Posaunen. Wie's heraufzieht!" (Werke, p. 153). This is the "doppelte Natur," of which he tells the disinterested Doctor (Werke, p. 159). He is also aware of being actively pursued by hostile forces, in the form of the Freemasons--a condition reminiscent of the members of the Danton party, who express during the prison scenes the same feeling of being singled out for suffering.

Woyzeck is essentially a tragedy of suffering, with Woyzeck as the centre and focus of it. He is the object of both cosmic and social suffering. The former is, as we have established, an inevitable part of man's fate; suffering caused to man by man is not. In Woyzeck, it is uncertain how much the economic exploitation of Woyzeck is responsible for his

mental distress. His physical strength is certainly sapped by his material condition--the words of the Doctor indicate this (Werke, p. 168)--and this suggests that his mental aberrations are worsened by his social suffering, both material and psychological.

The most remarkable aspect of Woyzeck's character is that in spite of his extreme spiritual suffering, he succeeds to a large extent in living a life of some value with Marie. Unlike Büchner's higher class figures, he possesses some inherent values, particularly his love for Marie and the child, which balance to a considerable degree his hyper-sensitive awareness of man's elemental suffering: "Im 'Woyzeck'-Drama gilt eine Aussage vom Nichts nur da und nur so lange, wie sie das Leiden des Mannes an der Umwelt ausdrückt, aber nicht, wo er ausspricht, was ihn noch hält."⁶ Here is the basic contrast with the higher class: true, the mental disorders increase and worsen (Werke, pp. 162-163, and 166-167), as his private life disintegrates, but the potential balance is at least indicated, between man as part of an inevitable cosmic malady which must be acknowledged, and man as a responsible social being. His life at the beginning has value, in spite of the chaos he feels threatening him.

The fairy-tale told by the Grandmother in Woyzeck is another interesting indication of how the lower class characters conceive of something like this universal malaise, which lies beyond the sphere of the purely personal. Like Woyzeck's visions, the fairy-tale portrays the existential plight of man; and like Woyzeck's comments on the general threats in nature,

the elements in the fairy-tale describe the pain and hostility of the universe affecting mankind, but they are objectified into the concrete images of folklore language: the unloved child, the moon as a piece of wood, the sun a withered flower, the earth an upturned pot, and weeping, the human response. In a few lines, the grandmother has summed up objectively all that Danton, the Captain and Payne say in ornate, abstract and egocentric language. The pain and uncertainty of the universe is integrated into the life and outlook of the people, in the form of a fairy-tale. Its form implies that it is part of the natural expression of the people--but they clearly do not become obsessed or excessively involved with this feeling of anxiety.

Though these descriptions of universal malaise by the Grandmother and Woyzeck are the fullest accounts of the suffering of man, there are other momentary indications amongst the poor, which reiterate their meaning: the element of malaise is thus suggested as a background to the whole drama. These momentary flashes of insight are reminders and suggestions only, rather than egocentric introspection. Woyzeck perceives the significance of the contrast between the gaiety of the fair and the picture of the man and the boy singing about the uncertainty of the world: "Sorgen und Feste!" Marie understands his meaning: "Komische Welt! Schöne Welt!;" both of them have responded to the intuitive message embodied in the folk-song: "Auf der Welt ist kein Bestand,/ Wir müssen alle sterben,/ Das ist uns wohlbekannt" (Werke, p. 155). In the last scene of the play (in Bergemann's edition), an unnamed

character comments on the uneasy atmosphere which has been present throughout; again, the elemental quality is implied in the nature imagery: "Es ist unheimlich! So dunstig, allenthalben Nebelgrau--und das Summen der Käfer wie gesprungne Glocken. Fort!" (Werke, p. 175). These last words are similar in essence to earlier words of Woyzeck on the same subject (Werke, p. 153).

Geerdt's has noted in Woyzeck the "Volksmässig" element, which is made up of details only, "aber sie beweisen allesamt, dass Büchner an die Potenzen glaubte, die im Schosse des Volkes ruhten."⁷ The potentiality of the people lies in the combination of their intuitive awareness of the truth about life, and basic values in conducting their lives. Büchner is not idealising the people; they are not exemplary in any major way. In the context of a rotten society, however, their more positive outlook is preferable to the expressions of nihilism, or the illusions of characters like the Doctor; and therein lies Büchner's hope.

In Dantons Tod, there are practically no references to the cosmic suffering of man; the crowd are much more concerned with the immediate problems of their lives, including the drive for survival. Consequently, their awareness of pain and suffering is transformed into images of their own reality, as, for instance, in the Beggar's folk-song: "Unter Kummer, unter Sorgen/ Sich bemühen vom frühen Morgen,/ Bis der Tag vorüber ist" (Werke, p. 37). The folk-song is the means Büchner uses, in Woyzeck, as well as in Dantons Tod, to illustrate fundamental conditions of life. In Dantons Tod, the cosmic suffering

is manifested in the form of personal suffering: the pain of love, death and parting. Like the Grandmother's fairy-tale, however, the more objective form of the folk-song has an intrinsic positive value.

The contrast between the neurotic introversion of the higher class and the outlook of the poor implies the same meaning as in Woyzeck: "Während sich im Stück an allen Ecken und Enden die Desillusionierung über die traditionellen Lehren der bürgerlichen Philosophie zeigt, während sich in den sentimentalischen Reflexionen der Intellektuellen die ganze Unsicherheit ihrer Prinzipien ausdrückt, wendet Büchner gleichzeitig jenes volkstümliche literarische Medium an, . . . um die Klassenintegrität der Volksmassen zu überzeugen."⁸ Though politically helpless, the people demonstrate in their attitude towards spiritual suffering a strength which is highly regarded by Büchner, and necessary for the growth to the new society.

One other attribute which is characteristic of the people, and which offers a more positive basis for social behaviour, is the lack of egocentricity amongst them. There are, of course, obvious exceptions. Politically, they are concerned with the improvement of their own material condition, and are prepared to accept any party which promises an improvement. Their resulting lack of judgement is felt by Büchner to be one of their worst traits.⁹ The figure of the Apprentice in Woyzeck is an outstanding instance amongst the poor of egocentricity and corruption. In general, however, the people have

a great awareness of others, of their comrades, but especially of their families, which makes their lives worthwhile. The character of Woyzeck offers the fullest representation of selfless dedication. His life is consumed by love for Marie and the child; for them he undergoes degradation and toil. In spite of his sad inability to break down the barrier of strangeness other people see surrounding him, he makes a definite attempt at communication--evident in his caring for Marie, his farewell to Andres, his comrade, and even in his relationships with the Doctor and the Captain.

In Dantons Tod, the element of family love is a striking aspect of the speech of the people. It is partly because of this love that they become so violent and dangerous. The Citizen, for example, knows how to arouse hostility towards Danton, by reminding the people of the outrages committed against their families, in III,9: "er . . . schläft bei euren Weibern und Töchtern, wenn er betrunken ist" (Werke, p. 70). This reiterates a theme already struck in I,2, by a member of the crowd; during this same scene, yet another comment of the Citizen appeals to the family feelings of the crowd: "Unsere Weiber und Kinder schreien nach Brot, wir wollen sie mit Aristokratenfleisch füttern" (Werke, p. 16). None of the political planning and machinations of the revolutionaries can match the power, and the danger, of these pleas. It is also interesting to bear in mind Danton's words to Julie to appreciate the contrast: "Wir wissen wenig von einander. . . . wir sind sehr einsam" (Werke, p. 9).

Because the people have worthwhile causes to make them

fight, they are the most vital group amongst the characters of the dramas. Their vitality will be discussed again later; the reason for this vitality, however, is significant here because it represents a very basic contrast to the purposelessness of the higher class outlook: "das Leben ist nicht die Arbeit wert, die man sich macht, es zu erhalten" (Werke, p. 36). This is Danton's philosophy, which leads to apathy and then to death.

The vitality of the people represents for Büchner the power of life, while he refers to the old society and its products as dead--and certainly portrays them as either dead or diseased in his dramas. Many critics have commented on this significant connection in the higher social groups of their class and their outlook. Ludwig Büttner calls all Büchner's heroes "Gestalten . . . einer besonderen geistigen Daseinsform . . . Es sind Typen . . . einer überreifen Kultur."¹⁰ His comment includes Woyzeck, too--mistakenly, for Woyzeck's suffering is, as we have seen, rooted in the basic condition of man, rather than in his culture. Rilla, too, refers to "einer untergangsreifen Welt,"¹¹ and Lindenberger to a "sick and precarious world."¹² These references indicate the decay inherent in such neurotic outlooks as shown by the higher class. We saw in Chapter I the political rottenness of society; here we have examined the spiritual rottenness of the prevailing group. The conclusion remains the same: the society is old, dead, and ready for renewal through the only class not wholly corrupted by it.

CHAPTER III

NATURE AND HUMAN NATURE

It was noted in Chapter I that nature was normative for the social activities and social organisation of man. Nature, or its opposite, an unnatural condition, is a theme running through the Hessische Landbote, and there is a strong element of nature in Büchner's creative works. It is often the antithesis of society, representing in some respects a harmony not found in man's society. Danton, Leonce and Woyzeck all escape at some point into nature, Danton and Leonce to avoid their obligations in their respective societies, Woyzeck to find the self-assertion which he cannot attain in his hostile society.

The term "natural," however, applied to the behaviour of man must be clearly defined within the context of Büchner's works, for it is not animal nature, but human nature, which is Büchner's chief concern. In his works, he is dealing in part with man disnatured in some way. His criticism of this disnaturing process is never absent: from the criticism must be concluded Büchner's views on the laws governing man in society. One example of a disnaturing process has already been examined: the political and economic injustice loathed by Büchner for its unnaturalness. His criticism of the injustice illustrates how the laws of man and the laws of nature are separate. Ego-

centricity and the survival of the fittest are laws of the animal world, but they are not applicable to man's society, for he must subject himself to laws which benefit, not the individual alone, but the society as a whole. Society had, however, shaped institutions which were not beneficial to all, and which resulted primarily in ensuring the well-being and supremacy of the higher class. It is significant to note that Büchner makes great use of animal imagery in denouncing the rulers of this unnatural society (Werke, p. 338). In human society, egocentricity to the extent of disparaging a large social group is an unnatural and harmful outlook, which, Büchner believes, is responsible for bad social relationships and for the cruelty displayed to society's weaker members.

There are many other examples which show man behaving "unnaturally"--in the sense of behaving in a way unworthy of a human being. Even in Büchner's sympathetic characters, like Marie, Woyzeck and Danton, unnatural traits, that is, traits unworthy of a human being, are discernible; all are connected with the function of physical nature in man, and its part in the make-up of the whole man. In this chapter, the differing attitudes in society will be examined, with reference to the natural drives of man. Büchner examines through his characters the human reaction to the senses, and especially to the function and characteristics of sex. It will be seen that the attitudes of the higher class differ to a large extent from those of the lower class, and differ, too, amongst themselves.

In general the characters of Büchner's dramas from the higher class cannot maintain the necessary balance between the body and the human spirit. By contrast, lower class figures respect the drives of the body, and are able to function relatively healthily, as human beings who accept their animal make-up, and yet keep it within bounds which are proper and necessary, if a society is to benefit and preserve its members. The attitude of the upper class is further divided. The most common attitude emerging from the dramas tends to minimise the drives of the body. Robespierre, the Captain and the Doctor are the chief exponents of this outlook. Another attitude, demonstrated chiefly by Danton and St. Just, represents the opposite extreme viewpoint, by taking from the natural world drives and laws, which they then attempt to apply to their own human sphere.

A. Epicureanism in man

As a natural scientist, Büchner must have been aware of the force and importance of the animal drives in man. One must conclude from his portrayal of the two types of attitudes prevailing amongst the higher social groups that a healthy and moderate outlook acknowledges and respects these drives, and also controls them. This control comes as the result of love and consideration for others. In examining the attitudes of society to nature, we shall see that the lower class, the least educated, and the least cultured, offers a more honest perspective on man as a total being with a body, as well as a mind.

We are reminded of the animal in man's nature through-

out Büchner's dramas, in the various references to the functions of the senses which are expressed by all members of society. The senses represent a very basic bond between the classes, uniting them in at least one common need and aim. The forces of pleasure and pain are fundamental in determining behaviour. Büttner makes this point, when he writes: "Die Stärke des Lebens liegt in der vitalen Sinnlichkeit. Sie ist die lebendige naturhafte Befriedigung am Leben . . . Alle Stände sind ihr in gleicher Weise verfallen."¹ We saw in chapter I how hunger, one animal drive, determined the behaviour of the crowd as a political unit. Man in general is, however, determined on a larger basis by such drives.

Danton's behaviour in Dantons Tod can be understood and explained to a large extent by his insistence on the rights of the body. He, very characteristically, expresses the forces of the natural drives as abstracts. Robespierre asks him if he denies the quality of virtue, to which Danton replies in the affirmative: "Und das Laster. Es gibt nur Epikureer, und zwar grobe und feine, Christus war der feinste; das ist der einzige Unterschied, den ich zwischen den Menschen herausbringen kann. Jeder handelt seiner Natur gemäss, d.h. er tut, was ihm wohltut" (Werke, p. 29). Payne's philosophy similarly revolves round sensuous satisfaction, round pleasure and pain. Even Robespierre's insistence on self-discipline and morality is called by Danton a very refined spiritual pleasure, so that Robespierre, too, is seen subjected to the drive for pleasure--even though it is not strictly the pleasure of the drives of the body.

The plans of the revolutionaries for the future state indicate the importance attached by Danton and his friends to sensuous pleasure. Herault suggests: "Jeder muss in seiner Art geniessen können, jedoch so, dass keiner auf Unkosten eines andern geniessen oder ihn in seinem eigentümlichen Genuss stören darf" (Werke, p. 11). Camille envisages the same kind of Epicurean indulgence that Danton describes: "Der göttliche Epikur und die Venus mit dem schönen Hintern müssen statt der Heiligen Marat und Chalier die Türsteher der Republik werden" (Werke, p. 12). On a less serious level, Valerio, in Leonce und Lena echoes these plans in a half-comic vision of the future, including such pleasurable and contradictory items as figs, macaroni, beautiful bodies and an accommodating religion (Werke, p. 147). The bourgeois characters in Dantons Tod conceive of their pleasure very notably in refined, luxurious terms--exotic food, a Bacchanalian enjoyment of wine and the human body characteristic of Classical antiquity. In this, they are clearly influenced by their background and education, which has given them knowledge of such refined terms and concepts.

The representatives of the higher class also reveal a horror of pain, and consequently death, which is the ultimate experience of pain. Fear of death is one striking characteristic of the Captain in Woyzeck, who is afraid to an abnormal degree. The revolutionaries in Dantons Tod are also horrified by the idea of death's pain. Danton especially is obsessed by the physical torture of his long drawn out execution pro-

cess: "Aber es ist mir, als wäre ich in ein Mühlwerk gefallen, und die Glieder würden mir langsam systematisch von der kalten physischen Gewalt abgedreht" (Werke, p. 66).

The poor, too, are subjected to the power exercised by their sensual drives, but their needs are much more basic. Poverty, for them, means deprivation of food, the most basic need of the body. Consequently, in Dantons Tod, the lives of the crowd are motivated by a desire for food which often makes them act in an animal way, thus distorting their behaviour as complete human beings. This is another illustration of how the potentiality of the people is destroyed at a fundamental level. The contrast in terms between the refinements of bourgeois pleasure and the more basic requirements of the lower class is indicated by Lacroix: "Und ausserdem, sind wir lasterhaft, . . . d.h. wir geniessen; und das Volk ist tugendhaft, d.h. es geniesst nicht, weil ihm die Arbeit die Genussorgane stumpf macht, es besäuft sich nicht, weil es kein Geld hat, und es geht nicht ins Bordell, weil es nach Käse und Hering aus dem Hals stinkt und die Mädchen davor einen Ekel haben" (Werke, p. 27). In spite of the differences in the enjoyment of the two classes, the search for pleasure remains basic.

The poor themselves express their needs and drives much more simply than the ornate desires and wishes of the bourgeoisie. In a brief scene in the last act of Dantons Tod, a cart driver comments to a fellow-worker, who has just referred to the imprisoned revolutionaries as fodder for worms: "Meine Kinder sind auch Würmer, und die wollen auch ihr Teil davon" (Werke, p. 74). His comment indicates a general ten-

dency of the lower class towards an honest awareness of man's make-up, which is, in many respects, such as hunger, the same as an animal's make-up. The people do not attempt to rationalise or sublimate these drives. Woyzeck illustrates the same straightforwardness when he talks to the Captain about sex, another basic similarity between animals and men. He refers simply to "Fleisch und Blut" (Werke, p. 152), the power of nature in man.

These are the general attitudes in the dramas which indicate the importance of man's bodily drives. It will be seen from a close examination of the behaviour of the two classes that the educated, in their reaction to nature and natural drives, and to the satisfaction of the senses, have distorted man by suppressing and abusing these drives, and ascribing to him values which are not properly his.

B. Suppression of the natural drives in man

The most unsympathetic characters from the upper class in Büchner's works are those who attempt to deny nature for varying reasons. They simply reject or minimise man as a "natural" being, in the sense of a being who must acknowledge certain drives he has in common with animals. This way of thinking can be seen partially as the result of education, and the pursuit of morality, both of which seek to exalt the spiritual personality of man. These cultural activities have detracted from the importance of man's body: some cultured characters from the higher class consequently despise the flesh.

These educated characters use their particular cultural education and background to argue against any concessions to the body. The Captain, for example, calls on the conventional morality of the Church to condemn Woyzeck's illegitimate child: "Woyzeck, Er hat keine Moral! Moral, das ist, wenn man moralisch ist, versteht Er. Es ist ein gutes Wort" (Werke, p. 152). By ridiculing him, Büchner negates the argument of the Captain, who merely repeats what he has been told, without understanding and making sense of it. This is a loveless kind of morality, which condemns without question something considered bestial. In contrast to the Captain, Woyzeck does not frown upon the natural drives which have produced the child. He refers to money, the main social differentiating factor between the classes, as the cause for the difference in attitudes. Here, Büchner indicates the antithesis of money and the natural drives: "Geld! Wer kein Geld hat--Da setzt einmal eines seinesgleichen auf die Moral in die Welt! Man hat auch sein Fleisch und Blut" (Werke, p. 152). The same point is made again a few lines later. The implication is that the Captain has committed himself to the empty values of the moneyed class, while Woyzeck has committed himself to making the best out of essential man.

Büchner indicates the shallowness of the Captain's pretensions by a humorous detail in this scene: he shows the Captain to be incapable of controlling his own desires, even with the help of the morality he admires so much. This unsuccessful attempt at suppression is indicated by Büchner in the sudden break in the grammatic structure of the Captain's

explanation of morality, his euphemism "Liebe" for sexual drives, and in his very evocative description of a tempting scene: "Fleisch und Blut? Wenn ich am Fenster lieg, wenn's geregnet hat, und den weissen Strümpfen so nachseh, wie sie über die Gassen springen--verdammte, Woyzeck, da kommt mir die Liebe! Ich habe auch Fleisch und Blut. Aber Woyzeck, die Tugend! die Tugend!" (Werke, p. 152).

The Doctor's attitude to Woyzeck is almost exactly parallel to this situation. Woyzeck again makes a claim for "natural" man, while the Doctor exalts the scientific man. Woyzeck, who is the subject of the Doctor's experiments on diet and its effects on urine, has been seen by the Doctor urinating. Woyzeck's action here is analogous to his illicit sex life with Marie, in that it is not within acceptable social bounds, as far as his superiors are concerned, and in that it reflects a spontaneous natural urge. Just as the Captain had interpreted Woyzeck's relationship with Marie as unworthy of a virtuous human being, so the Doctor sees Woyzeck's behaviour here as sub-human in a different way. Woyzeck again explains simply, and in basic terms: "Aber, Herr Doktor, wenn einem die Natur kommt" (Werke, p. 158), but the Doctor is outraged that nature should be indulged in this way: "Die Natur! Hab ich nicht nachgewiesen, dass der Musculus constrictor vesicae dem Willen unterworfen ist? Die Natur! Woyzeck, der Mensch ist frei, in dem Menschen verklärt sich die Individualität zur Freiheit." (Werke, pp. 158-159).

There is another aspect to the interview of Woyzeck

and the Doctor, already touched on in chapter I. Woyzeck, because of his poverty, has entered into a contract with the Doctor to provide urine for his experiments. The Doctor is not only indignant for moral reasons, but also because he feels he has the right to the possession of Woyzeck's urine, and has lost money. This indignation is probably the real, but hidden source of his moral wrath about free will; though he is indignant about the morals involved in Woyzeck's action, he has no compunction about buying and exploiting Woyzeck's body in this way.

Like the Captain, too, the Doctor can barely control his own natural instincts. His attempt to do so is portrayed by Büchner in a comic light, as in the scene with the Captain. The stage directions read: "Tritt auf ihn los" (Werke, p. 159), as if the Doctor goes to attack Woyzeck, and then he checks himself with a reminder of his principles of self-control and free will: "Nein, Woyzeck, ich ärgre mich nicht, Ärger ist ungesund, ist unwissenschaftlich" (Werke, p. 159). His principles of exalting science at the expense of the body thus appear again as de-humanising factors. Another humorous touch whereby Büchner shows the hollowness of this character, is the Doctor's comment to his students, which reveals a sexual awareness hardly appropriate to his principles of science and free will: "Meine Herren, ich bin auf dem Dach wie David, als er die Bathseba sah, aber ich sehe nichts als die culs de Paris der Mädchenpension im Garten trocknen." (Werke, p. 167). The Biblical image shows off his reading and "culture," but it does not effectively sublimate the desire, as he perhaps

intends.

In their relationship to Woyzeck, both the Doctor and the Captain victimise him because he is socially weaker. Their behaviour is parallel to the egocentric victimising of the masses on a political level, though in Woyzeck, the cruelty is of a more personal nature. Because they are only concerned with the mind of man, both characters despise Woyzeck--the Captain concludes that he is "ganz abscheulich dumm" (Werke, p. 152), and the Doctor degrades him by expressly regarding him as an animal to replace the cat in his experiments. Consequently, they abuse him whenever possible, and can do so because of Woyzeck's social and economic inferiority. Both illustrate a loveless culture, which has no place for the complete human being. Instead, they exaggerate one aspect of man, his mind, and as a result, they both distort themselves and attempt to distort others.

Robespierre, in Dantons Tod, offers another contribution to the discussion of the denial of nature in man. He is a bourgeois, yet he supports the lower class against the aristocrats and his fellow bourgeois, because, theoretically, he admires the "gesunde Volkskraft" (Werke, p. 28). In this he misjudges the people completely. They are not virtuous and self-denying from choice. Given the necessary wealth, they would pursue the same pleasures which Danton enjoys, and which Robespierre condemns as lascivious living. In making virtue and self-discipline the only desirable moral qualities, which override all others, he too, is as guilty of distortion as the "bourgeois" characters of Woyzeck. Viëtor, in fact,

refers to his "kleinbürgerliche Moralität."² He is more sympathetic than the Doctor and the Captain because he is countering Danton's extreme apathy, and believes, at least partly, that he is acting for the good of the Revolution. Even so, Büchner, by making him cold and ruthless, discounts his theory of virtue as the only worthwhile value in life; humanity is a much more important quality to Büchner, and humanity is what Robespierre lacks.

In a small sketch in Dantons Tod, the promenade scene, Büchner draws together a collection of social groups, who offer different attitudes to life, some of which are enlightening for this examination of the classes' perspectives on nature and man. The brilliance of Büchner's sketch lies in his contrasting of the classes, allowing one view to be judged or modified by another, which is almost simultaneously expressed. The highest group is represented by an aristocratic lady who looks at a flower, proclaiming: "Diese natürlichen Freuden, dieser reine Genuss der Natur! Sieh, Eugenie, nur die Tugend hat Augen dafür" (Werke, p. 38). This is clearly the only kind of nature that she, as a refined lady, would accept--because it can be more readily identified with virtue. Simultaneously, the young man accompanying her is casting lewd aspersions on a passing aristocratic couple: the lady bears the illegitimate child of an affair, while her husband assumes it is his, we are told. This is one reminder of other "natural pleasures" which would perhaps shock the older aristocratic lady, but which certainly is a more realistic pointer to the function of nature in man. As another reminder, Büchner pre-

faces the lady's remark with two indications of what "nature" really is: firstly, Danton, shouting lustily: "Möchte man nicht drunter springen, sich die Hosen vom Leibe reißen und sich über den Hintern begatten wie die Hunde auf der Gasse?" (Werke, p. 38); and secondly, the prostitutes enticing the soldiers. By juxtaposing these attitudes to nature, Büchner invalidates society's claim to the superiority of virtue and culture.

Preceding and following these outlooks are the two extremes of nature and culture, appropriately in the form of a beggar and two aristocrats. The Beggar acts almost as a background to the high talk of virtue and the bawdy activities in the crowd. Twice he sings, each time expressing the same nature image: "Eine Handvoll Erde und ein wenig Moos." (Werke, pp. 37-38). This is a reminder of man's basic nature, suggesting the grave to which he will eventually come, and stressing his corruptibility, his physical, rather than spiritual, essence. The Beggar offers another basic truth about life in society in his brief appearance. He compares the Gentleman's coat with his rags, and shows how both fulfil the same purpose. The Gentleman, as a more cultured social member, wears the coat for reasons of vanity, as well as to keep warm. The Beggar is a reminder of the animal equality in men. Ambition, zeal and vanity do not invalidate man as an animal, trying to keep warm: "Ihr habt Euch gequält, um einen Genuss zu haben; denn so ein Rock ist ein Genuss, ein Lumpen tut's auch " (Werke, p. 37). The wisdom of the Beggar's remark is lost on the Gentlemen, for they, very ironically, terminate

the scene, proclaiming culture and the mind of man as triumphant over everything: "Die Menschheit eilt mit Riesenschritten ihrer hohen Bestimmung entgegen" (Werke, p. 39).

The point has, however, already been made: "Indem der Sänger an die Vergänglichkeit und die Eitelkeit der bürgerlichen Lebensauffassung mahnt, entreisst er ihr die Maske und zeigt dieses Leben als eine Farce."³

C. Abuse of the natural drives in man

The other main distortion of man is the attitude illustrated by Payne, Danton and St. Just, all of whom use nature, and nature's law, to justify the behaviour of man. These natural laws become harmful when applied to man's society, which must be subjected to the laws of love and consideration for others.

The satire with which Büchner treats the philosopher, Payne, in Dantons Tod, has already been indicated. It is into Payne's mouth that Büchner puts an exaggerated Epicurean theory, which is really an animal law, taken from nature and applied to man: "Ich weiss nicht, ob es an und für sich was Böses oder was Gutes gibt, und habe deswegen doch nicht nötig, meine Handlungsweise zu ändern. Ich handle meiner Natur gemäss; was ihr angemessen, ist für mich gut und ich tue es, und was ihr zuwider, ist für mich böse und ich tue es nicht und verteidige mich dagegen, wenn es mir in den Weg kommt" (Werke, p. 53). The logical and extreme application of this principle would cut across the rights and privileges of others: in a society, a theory which is really a form of



survival of the fittest is not permissible. Payne's attitude, with its smug self-sufficiency, does, however, substantiate the egocentricity of the educated class.

Danton, the chief exponent of the theory and practice of Epicureanism, contrasts sharply with the more typical attitude of asceticism amongst Büchner's upper class characters. Though he is, in many ways, typically bourgeois, he has rejected bourgeois morality, and turns to the full enjoyment of the senses, partly as a compensation for the despair resulting from his philosophy of life. Benno von Wiese connects his sensual pleasures with his neurosis: his enjoyment becomes an "Ausweg, um die Einsamkeit, in der die Menschen nicht mehr voneinander wissen, noch ertragen zu können."⁴ His enjoyment brings no satisfaction, however, partly because it is a forced compensation for his spiritual tensions, and partly because it is not natural to man, even if it is natural to animals. It neglects the sphere of human love, which can be the sole controller of nature in man; consequently he still feels isolated and excluded from others.

Danton's promiscuity is expressed unconsciously in the way he refers to anything sexual. This applies to his own behaviour, which he equates in his terms with animal behaviour. We saw this illustrated in the promenade-scene, where he compares himself to a dog. Using the same image, Büchner passes judgement on Danton's bestial behaviour through a remark of Lacroix, on his meeting with Danton and the prostitute Marion: "Auf der Gasse waren Hunde, eine Dogge und ein Bologneser Schosshündlein, die quälten sich" (Werke, p. 24). The

comparison to Danton is explicitly pointed by Lacroix, and Büchner's judgement of Danton's behaviour is unequivocal.

Danton's attitude is criticised in this way by Büchner, but other aspects of his Epicureanism must be considered. These explain why, in spite of the wrongness of his attitude, Danton remains a sympathetic character. Firstly, his theory of the importance of the senses contains some truth: "Jeder handelt seiner Natur gemäss, d.h. er tut, was ihm wohltut" (Werke, p. 29). There is no doubt that Büchner endorses this view, for the rights and power of the natural drives in man are acknowledged extensively in his works. Even if the degree of Danton's indulgence of the senses exceeds what is proper in a human being, his words reflect at least a desire to exalt life and vitality. Secondly, his behaviour brings him no real happiness, and he is left, still longing for complete human contact: "Warum kann ich deine Schönheit nicht ganz in mich fassen, sie nicht ganz umschliessen?" (Werke, p. 24). His endeavours have not relieved the loneliness he expresses in the first scene. His discontent leads to doubts about the validity of his theory and actions. Danton's sincerity, finally, prevents his being branded as a mere lecher. He is desperately concerned with discovering the truth behind life; by exalting the senses, he seems to be seeking the fulfilment of one part of man. He is, at least, honest in his views, and a much more acceptable figure than any of the other upper class characters discussed here.

A theoretical justification of man's cruel and selfish behaviour by natural law is found in St. Just's contention

that anything is permissible to force through the aims of the Revolution. He argues against the Revolutionaries who do not want more bloodshed: "Einige allgemeine Betrachtungen mögen sie überzeugen, dass wir nicht grausamer sind als die Natur . . . die Natur folgt ruhig und unwiderstehlich ihren Gesetzen; der Mensch wird vernichtet, wo er mit ihnen in Konflikt kommt. . . . Soll eine Idee nicht ebensogut wie ein Gesetz der Physik vernichten dürfen, was sich ihr widersetzt?" (Werke, p. 49). This is a lethal theory which, applied logically, could wipe out great sections of humanity, put into the power of a tyrant like St. Just. His sole justification for supremacy of the particular cause of the Revolution is, he claims, its morality. This kind of outlook is exemplified by the cruel and inhuman behaviour of Collot and Barere (Werke, pp. 62-63). By placing this theory among such ruthless and unsympathetic characters as these, Büchner discredits it completely.

D. Lower class attitudes

To complete Büchner's presentation of the theme of the abuse of nature, the behaviour of Marie, in Woyzeck, must be examined. It is intended in this examination to show how the poor offer a more balanced picture of man. Marie is the obvious exception. She is an interesting character in whom the balance of the animal and humanity is precarious. In her relationship with Woyzeck and the child, she leads a "social" life--not accepted by society, but a life showing all the elements of love and fidelity which society expects in the family unit. She chooses the Drum-Major out of purely animal

desire, which she does not attempt to disguise. She is justified partly by a dissatisfying life with Woyzeck, but she herself knows what her real motive is: lust. The Drum-Major is quite simply a more splendid figure than Woyzeck, with a better body. The purely animal instinct motivating these two characters emerges in the terms they use, which stress only the sexuality, not the whole person. She is, for the Drum-Major, a sexual creature and child-bearer: "wir wollen eine Zucht von Tambourmajors anlegen" (Werke, p. 160); "die hat Schenkel, und alles so heiss!" (Werke, p. 168). And over Marie he, too, exercises only an animal power: "Über die Brust wie ein Rind und ein Bart wie ein Löw" (Werke, p. 160) is her description of him.

Büchner shows how this power, which is present in all men, can be deadly when it breaks into human society as a dominant factor. Marie's animal infidelity destroys Woyzeck, who depends absolutely on her love and humanity. He responds to her animal behaviour with an action equally animalistic: the destruction by murder of someone who offends. Benno von Wiese refers to this murder as "ein Getriebenwerden, von der Natur selbst zudiktirt."⁵ Her animal instincts thus destroy her, too.

Marie's behaviour, though it is wrong, since she is not merely an animal, is at least an honest assertion of sexual desire: she does not distort, deny or condemn her sexuality as such, and it is felt to be a very integral part of her whole personality. It is also a part which is neglected in the strange life she leads with Woyzeck. Her honesty about

this sexual assertion distinguishes her from the perversions and dishonesty of the higher class: "Sie [Marie and the Drum-Major] handeln, wie 'ungebildete' Menschen handeln, sie tun, was sie müssen, triebhaft, dumpf, jeder nach seiner Natur. Aber wenigstens handeln sie ohne Lüge, aufrichtig."⁶ There is, however, no real excuse for her behaviour--she knows this, and subjects herself to the torturing of her conscience: her remorse illustrates the wrongness of her behaviour. Lust and sexual desire form one part of man, and must not be denied as the Captain denies them; but they are not characteristic of the whole man, unless they are tempered by love.

Büchner offers, against the corruption and perversions rife in society, one picture of genuine human effort to find a worthy place in it for the whole man, for his body as well as his spirit: Woyzeck. Much of the drama Woyzeck is given to the discussion of the inherent attributes of man. As one such attribute, the animal drives and their function form a dominant theme, constantly examined, from both the higher class, and from the lower class, viewpoint. Woyzeck's opinions and actions can be substantiated by comparisons to those of the common people in Dantons Tod. One of the most basic similarities is a far greater honesty towards, and awareness of, natural drives. This honesty is the basis of an instinctive understanding as to the substance of man.

It has already been pointed out that the poor are least influenced by the refinements of society which prove so harmful to the wealthy, educated class. This view is complemented by the nearness of the lower class to nature, and a

greater awareness of it. The antithesis of nature and society in Woyzeck's conversation with the Captain has already been discussed: since society and its institutions offer nothing to the lower class, either materially or spiritually, they live in a less social, and more natural, condition. Consequently, the natural drives influence them more than other social groups, and they alone are prepared to acknowledge man as half-animal. Unlike Danton, however, who shares this view of man, they are not motivated by egocentricity or by a desire to seek escape from private woes. There is nothing forced about the people's enjoyment of natural drives; rather, these are felt to be an integral part of their lives and in no way problematical. Only society, in Woyzeck, makes them problematical.

The most obvious contrast between the attitudes of the classes towards nature in man touches the question of sex. Since the rich have at least their primary needs satisfied, whereas the poor do not, sex is the only sphere in which both classes have, at least in some respects, equal opportunity for fulfilment.

The attitudes of the upper class towards sex must be borne in mind, in order to appreciate the contrasting outlook offered by the lower class. Compared to the hypocrisy and pervertedness of their superiors, the poor have a refreshingly normal attitude to sex. The dialogue of Dantons Tod during the crowd scenes contains numerous puns of a sexual nature, but they are at least puns which are in honest, human terms, rather than the animal jokes of Danton. In IV, 4, for example, the

Gaoler tries to chase away the girls standing in the way of the cart; to which the Driver replies vehemently: "Halt't Euren Platz vor! Um ein Mädel fährt man nit herum, immer in die Mitt 'nein" (Werke, p. 75).

The puns indicate enjoyment of sex on the part of the crowd. There is certainly no idea of shame attached to the function of sex in man, even if it is forced on human beings as a way of life, rather than a spontaneous urge. This is the argument of Simon's wife in I,2: "Wir arbeiten mit allen Gliedern, warum denn nicht auch damit" (Werke, p. 14). Similarly, Rosalie and Adelaide have no compunction about exploiting the sex drive in man for purely financial reasons. They, too, share the enjoyment illustrated by the lower class in the drama, as their song indicates. In a brief duet, the soldier asks "Tut dir der Schaden weh, Schaden weh?" to which Rosalie replies "Ach nein, ihr Herrn Soldaten,/ Ich hätt es gerne meh, gerne meh!" (Werke, p. 38).

Only in Woyzeck is the full relationship between sex, love and society developed. Society regards Woyzeck and his family as an unworthy unit. In contrasting Woyzeck's attitude with society's code, Büchner extols the plea for the greater acknowledgement of nature--not wild, animal nature, as the shallow thinking in society regards Woyzeck and his life, but human nature, which is a combination of the animal and the spiritual. The family unit of Woyzeck is human in essence, for it fulfils all the demands society should make on it. It can only exist outside society, because there has been no attempt to discipline natural instincts, the one demand on man

that society, in this drama, does make. Natural instincts appear generally intolerable to refined society.

The question of "Warum ist der Mensch?" (Werke, p. 166) is answered in several ways by the drama. The various levels of man are symbolically represented in the fair scenes-- scenes which are only loosely connected with the plot, but which function as a commentary on the meaning of the drama. The Animal-trainer presents a monkey, which is a worthless creature: "wie Gott sie gemacht: nix, gar nix," but which can be dressed by man to become either a soldier, "unterste Stufe von menschliche Geschlecht" (Werke, p. 155), or, when taught tricks, a baron, a member of the social "elite." This particular symbol from nature is followed immediately in the next scene by a second symbol: the actions of the horse present another perspective on man as a creature. The horse has been taught to reason, the noble attribute of social man; but in the middle of its act, it demonstrates, spontaneously or not, its animal nature, from which the Trainer deduces: "Mensch, sei natürlich!" (Werke, p. 157).

These symbolic scenes have unmistakable parallels in the text. Society does disparage the natural creature, and its drives--society's reaction to Woyzeck is the drama's illustration of this. He is also a soldier, considered as inferior, and close to the animal state. But Büchner connects both the soldier and the baron to the monkey, for both are mere facades. In so doing, he repeats the argument of Woyzeck in the first scene: man is partly an animal, and must be respected as such. This particular point suggests again Büch-

ner's insistence on equality, which had characterised his political thinking. It echoes, too, the Beggar's words in Dantons Tod, reminding us that all men are destined to nothing more than "eine Handvoll Erde" (Werke, p. 38). Büchner's second reminder of the animal equality of man, in the second fair scene, passes judgement on the treatment of Woyzeck by his superiors, and on the social attitude prevailing amongst them. The symbol of the horse's misbehaviour is parallel to Woyzeck's urinating--Lindenberger⁷ and Mautner⁸ both stress this parallel. Both the horse and the man are animals with unsuppressible drives which must be acknowledged. Men like the Doctor and the Captain are condemned because they exalt only the power of reason. From these brief scenes, and their significance in the drama as a whole, it can be concluded that man is more than a performing animal, but that his human attributes like reasoning, morality and philosophy do not make him independent of his animal make-up.

We shall see from an examination of Woyzeck, that he alone represents the potential balance between man as an animal and man as a civilised being. It has been noted how he asserts the animal drives of man--urinating and sexual relationships are necessary to all animals. In his behaviour towards Marie, up to the point of her infidelity, he shows nothing but love, with no indication of animal lust or selfishness--thus he completes the image of the natural, and the civilised man, as far as his relationship to his family is concerned.

After Marie's betrayal, however, which is basically

animal behaviour, Woyzeck resorts to animal killing, his only way of responding to the cruelty of her treatment. Büchner reveals this sudden invasion of animal power through the extensive use of "natural" images in Woyzeck's speech. On seeing the Drum-Major and Marie dance, he equates their actions with the copulation of animals: "Warum bläst Gott nicht die Sonn aus, dass alles in Unzucht sich übereinander wälzt, Mann und Weib, Mensch und Vieh?! Tut's am hellen Tag, tut's einem auf den Händen wie die Mücken!" (Werke, pp. 165-166). From this time until the murder, Woyzeck is obsessed only with the animal in Marie. She is a "Zickwolfin" (Werke, p. 166), and as he kills her, he is concerned with destroying her sexuality, and her crime. The animal power overtaking Woyzeck is made clear by Büchner in two other examples. He fights the Drum-Major, his sexual rival, as two animals would fight, and then he is seen with the Doctor, who equates him with an animal: "Willst du's machen wie die Katze?" (Werke, p. 168).

The execution of the murder restores some balance in Woyzeck's mind. He has destroyed the animal in Marie by this killing, and now she is again for him a complete, worthy, and civilised being. His remarks to her body do not fix on her sexuality, but on her hair's untidiness: "Was hängen deine Haare so wild? Hast du deine Zöpfe heut nicht geflochten?" (Werke, p. 174). His attitude towards her dead body is a sharp contrast to the remarks of the Drum-Major and his companion, which stressed only her sexual attributes.

The balance between nature and humanity is restored in Woyzeck, but only after disaster. Büchner shows in this

drama both the power of nature, in the wild, animal drives of Marie and the Drum-Major, and the power of man's mind, in the Doctor and the Captain. Neither power is self-sufficient: Büchner demonstrates this in the unloving and anti-social behaviour of both groups of people. The way to a happy existence for man is only indicated in Woyzeck, in the behaviour of one man. Even he, though he has many good qualities, is not the model of the complete ideal man. Büchner offers no such model in his works. He merely examines the values of his characters, and accepts those which appear worthwhile. Woyzeck illustrates the possibility, rather than the actuality, of this balance in man. The indications of a more balanced attitude are present, too, in the portrayal of the crowd in Dantons Tod. Like Woyzeck, they have their own code, and morals, which are felt to be distinct from the distortions of the bourgeois world. These distortions are one form of destruction, a slow death in society, equally as harmful as the swift destruction brought on by Marie's unworthy behaviour.

Society, as Büchner depicts it, offers no way of helping man to control his natural drives, because it cannot accept them as a part, but only a part, of man. Though he interprets Woyzeck's social and economic position differently, Peacock expresses this view when he writes: "By nature man is only partly brutish; he is more so when kept poor and in servitude. When Woyzeck murders it is partly a failure in the nature of man, if he remains animal and savage, but partly a failure in society, when it fails to do what it can to humanise its own members."⁹

Büchner's demonstration of the balance in man of two opposing forces ends in disaster in Woyzeck. There is a feeling that at least some kind of justice and purification has taken place; but there is also a feeling of wastage, for two potentially good parents die, leaving their child behind. Woyzeck is not strong enough to withstand the forces threatening him, from both without and within. Society has given no help to people like Woyzeck, who is completely rejected by it--largely because its members are not prepared to accept the whole man. Büchner's criticism of the inadequacy of society is again seen in terms of humanity; it has failed to promote love between its members, and in this sense it has failed at a very basic level.

CHAPTER IV

THE CLASSES IN BÜCHNER'S STAGE PRESENTATION

A. Büchner's use of dramatic contrast

Büchner presents in his dramas, not a unified, tightly-knit plot, but, as Baumann puts it, "ein Aggregat von selbständigen Situationen, deren Einzelgänge kaum oder gar nicht mehr kausal auseinander hervorgehen."¹ The technique of highlighting varying aspects of the whole world of the drama, rather than concentrating on a certain delimited theme is most prominent in Dantons Tod; in Leonce und Lena and in Woyzeck the element of a precise and definite plot increases. In all his dramas, however, Büchner retains the freedom of the dramatist to explore not one aspect of a single problem, the aspect motivating the action of the play, but the many contributory factors which throw light on the great number of problems his plays present.

Consequently, in Dantons Tod, not only the problems of Danton are discussed, but also the relevance of his problems in the whole world of the drama, in which the claims of a Robespierre, of the people, of his wife, of an imprisoned English philosopher who has little connection with the Revolution of the drama, are all valid. In Leonce und Lena, the spiritual problems of the hero are explained, put into a larger context and critically examined, by the other problems

the drama raises: kingship, the meaning of philosophy, the neglect of the kingdom's subjects and conventional morality. In Woyzeck, the variety is more relevant to the action of the plot. Though only fragmentary, the drama explains absolutely, by examining every issue relevant to the tragedy, why Woyzeck is forced to murder Marie. The social aspects, the psychological and spiritual sickness of Woyzeck, and especially the philosophical and spiritual question: "Warum ist der Mensch?" (Werke, p. 166) have little outward connection, but each individual problem represents a force within man, and within one man, Woyzeck.

In these brief comments on the plays, one important consequence of the greater freedom of the dramatist has been indicated: the use and function of contrast. We shall now see how Büchner, through his use of contrast, emphasises repeatedly the differences in the classes, and the values which are peculiar to the various social strata of his plays.

In general, the respective lives of the upper and the lower classes are separated, and often contrasted, by means of this constant alternation and shifting of the centre of interest. In Dantons Tod, the use of contrast heightens particularly the different socio-political attitudes of the bourgeois revolutionaries and the people. The juxtapositioning of the first and second scenes is one such contrast. In I,1, the revolutionaries play cards and talk idly of appeasement towards the enemy, and of the new republic, its freedom and its splendour. The following scene illustrates the reality and suffering, against which their fine theories are futile.

The contrast is one of political machinations versus the force of starvation, the theme which resounds both in I,2, and in every crowd scene in the drama: "Unsere Weiber und Kinder schreien nach Brot, wir wollen sie mit Aristokratenfleisch füttern" (Werke, p. 16). Lindemberger, too, has commented on the significance of this first contrast for the rest of the play; the contrast between "a scene of card players idling away their time" and the "picture of the brute, discontented masses"² indicates the separate ways of the bourgeoisie and the people, and the tension between them.

The same contrast is made evident in Act III, in which the two parties fight over the condemnation of the Danton party and the political course of the Revolution; outside the court, the people are concerned with the starvation they all face, the problem which is far more relevant and immediate to them than the political squabbles of their leaders: "Wir wollen Brot, Brot!" (Werke, p. 69). The contrast between the suffering of the people and the scheming of the politicians also serves to negate, or at least to question the validity of the latter. Such contrasts prevent the complacency of the audience, for the bourgeoisie and the people in Dantons Tod offer different perspectives on the Revolution and its problems. The suffering of the people, which had motivated Büchner's political thinking, is given additional dramatic stress in this way. The powerful crowd scenes increase to a great extent the sympathy felt for the position of the people.

In Leonce und Lena, Büchner introduces a reminder of the reality of material suffering, similar to that portrayed

in Dantons Tod, though his treatment is not as serious. In the midst of the make-believe world of the prince and princess and the crazed actions of a defunct monarch, Büchner places the misery of the abject, hungry peasants. The scene, though slight, serves as a commentary on the activities of the rulers, making them seem not only foolish, but also socially irresponsible.

As far as we can reconstruct the composition of Woyzeck, the division between the classes is again maintained by Büchner's technique of contrasting their respective lives; here, the social, rather than political, clash in outlooks is highlighted. The scenes in which either the Captain or the Doctor proclaim the values characteristic of the educated class are set amidst scenes from the life of the lower class. The insensate life led by these characters is thus thrown into sharp relief by the very real issues of love, fidelity and revenge, which the tortured Woyzeck is trying to comprehend.

In addition to the socio-political attitudes thus compared by the dramatist's method, general contrasts are made between the upper and lower class scenes of both Woyzeck and Dantons Tod, which are illuminating for an examination of the personal characteristics of the classes. One of the most striking contrasts to the static conversations of the educated class of these dramas is the vitality and action typifying the lower class scenes. Considered in the light of the general tendency towards spiritual sickness and introversion of the higher class, this contrast in vitality is yet another means whereby Büchner exalts the people by emphasising their

good qualities.

The scenes portraying the people also possess a plastic quality which displays their feeling of comradeship. Krapp has noted this quality in Woyzeck,³ in which the lower class characters, apart from the personal high points of the tragedy, appear in groups. They are seen on stage either at social functions like the fair, or the dancing in the inn, or in smaller groups: Marie and the children, Marie and her family, and Woyzeck and his comrade Andres. The impression is always given that they feel themselves to be a group with common aims and attitudes to life.

The element of comradeship is demonstrated on the stage in the crowd scenes from Dantons Tod, quite apart from the importance of the people as a unified political force. They appear as working comrades (IV,9 and II,6), or as members of a family (I,2 and IV,4), and offer a sharp contrast to the scenes portraying the bourgeois characters, in which there is failure of communication and no feeling of comradeship. Krapp describes Danton's words as "ins Leere gesprochen, an alle oder an niemanden, am meisten aber zum Sprechenden selbst."⁴

B. Language

Büchner's use of language is an essential part of his dramatic technique, and part of the manner in which he differentiates his characters. The contrast in language in his plays is extensive and significant for this study of the classes. Though all Büchner's characters, regardless of class, express certain common ideas, the way in which they express

them varies according to their social position, as does the language they use.

1. Language of the higher class

On the whole, the members of the upper class speak a somewhat elevated language, which is appropriate to those members of society who are educated and cultivated. There are fundamental differences amongst them, however, which should be borne in mind. In Dantons Tod it is clear that the bourgeois characters, in spite of their faults, are genuine and well-meaning, demanding a good deal of sympathy. Their speech is meant to be taken seriously, but this is not always the case in Leonce und Lena and Woyzeck, though there are similar problems in these dramas. The rulers of Popo, and the Captain and the Doctor in Woyzeck are not characters to be understood seriously and sympathetically. Leonce und Lena is a comedy, and its hero is accordingly laughable at times, because he exaggerates and intensifies his problems. In addition, the plot is set in a never-never land, with fairy-tale elements to detract from the seriousness. In Woyzeck, the characters of the Doctor and the Captain are caricatures, exemplifying only the worst aspects of cultivated man. As a result of these differences, the way in which Büchner handles these characters on stage varies, but his treatment questions, discredits and criticises them constantly in different degrees.

The most striking and most understandable contrast between the speech of the upper and lower classes, is that the former speak a language which is not only educated and cultivated, but also unduly ornate. Education has given

to the upper class a knowledge which is everywhere apparent in their speech: biblical knowledge (in Woyzeck, Werke, p. 167), biblical metaphors connected with the Robespierre party in Dantons Tod (Werke, pp. 32 and 50) and classical imagery and references, characterising especially the speech of the Danton party (Werke, pp. 25, 34, 40, 56, 76, 77 and 78). Classical references are also evident in Leonce und Lena (Werke, p. 118).

In itself, the extensive use of such historical imagery and references is no more than an integral part of the speech of an educated person. In Dantons Tod, however, the extensive use of such metaphors becomes a disturbing element in the speech of the bourgeois revolutionaries, for it implies that these characters are engrossed with the past and with a dead culture, rather than with the reality presented by the issues of the Revolution. In the first scene, this note is sounded: the new republic is heralded by references to Epicure and Venus (Werke, p. 12), rather than political and social realities. St. Just, too, wishes to conduct a campaign like that of Moses, and justifies his new plans with a historical analogy: "Die Revolution ist wie die Töchter des Pelias: sie zerstückt die Menschheit, um sie zu verjüngen" (Werke, p. 50). It should be added of course that the historical revolutionaries did speak in this manner. This is one of the traits which Büchner took from his historical sources and adapted so well to fit into the general presentation of his revolutionary characters.

In a thorough study on Büchner's use of dialogue, Helmut Krapp divides the elevated language of the bourgeois in Dantons Tod into several categories:⁵ amongst them are the

Roman rhetorical style of the revolutionaries in I,1 (a style parodied by Büchner in the following crowd scene, mocking and questioning the solemn seriousness of the first scene), and the deductive arguments of St. Just's rhetoric.

Common to the two categories mentioned here is the embellishment of learning; but it is learning which has brought no understanding to man. Consequently, the speech of the bourgeois revolutionaries is reduced to an impressive use of words without real meaning, and certainly without value. Krapp calls the language of I,1, in which the revolutionaries make plans for the future republic, "abstrakt-theoretisch . . . wie die der Gesetzesparagraphen."⁶ The language is abstract because it is devoid of any sense of reality, and because the revolutionaries are not involved in striving for a worthwhile form of government which will meet the demands of the situation in the drama.

Krapp, in his analysis of St. Just's speech to the deputies, illustrates the perfectly logical development of the argument, and also the abstract, loveless tone it embodies: "ein sophistischer Beweis der Guillotine aus dem Wesen der Natur."⁷ This character embodies the terrifying extreme possible, when logic and the intellect, products of a refined culture, are not tempered by love. St. Just's words characterise him as an abstraction, a figure who is cold and unsympathetic because he offers no more than an inhuman argument. Like the revolutionaries in the first scene, he is not a complete character, but merely a function of his own words: "nicht etwa, dass die Sprache den Charakter St. Justs

skizzierte; sie reproduziert ihn vielmehr komplett, d.h. er geht als Gestalt nicht in seine Rolle ein, um sich darin zu verwirklichen, aber er besitzt als Gestalt diese einzige Sprache."⁸

The very same elements are demonstrated in the character of Robespierre, with the same conclusion: that a man who is devoid of emotion, and who relies solely on the abstract justification of his actions is unworthy as a human being and as a politician. Apart from a brief glimpse into the doubts he undergoes in Act I, Robespierre talks entirely in long speeches, addressed either to the public, or to smaller groups, or to individuals. Regardless of his audience, his manner is monotonously rhetorical and abstract. Speaking to the crowd in his first appearance, he adopts the tone which remains throughout: "Armes, tugendhaftes Volk! . . . Du kannst nur durch deine eigene Kraft fallen, das wissen deine Feinde" (Werke, p. 16). Later we find him using the same tone to Danton: "Das Laster muss bestraft werden" (Werke, p. 28), and to the Jacobin Club: "Die Waffe der Republik ist der Schrecken, die Kraft der Republik ist die Tugend" (Werke, p. 19).

In the stage presentation of these revolutionaries in Dantons Tod, Büchner criticises the latter by assigning to them certain types of speech: "Büchner defines and evaluates even those characters whom he takes most seriously through their sins of language, without needing to add his comments through their actions or through other characters."⁹ Robes-

pierre and St. Just are in this way discredited completely and the idle, disinterested mood of the revolutionaries in the first scene is castigated.

Such features in the speech of revolutionaries from both parties, together with their inability to comprehend fully the Revolution, or to further its cause, serve only to underline Büchner's insight into the faults and weakness of the bourgeoisie. Through other characters, Büchner mimics the preoccupation with the past demonstrated by his more serious figures. Simon, in Dantons Tod, attempts to use a way of speech which is in vogue in the fervour of the Revolution, but which, after a grand beginning, flounders: "Ich sage dir, die Brust deiner Kornelia wird wie das Euter der römischen Wölfin--nein das geht nicht: Romulus war ein Tyrann, das geht nicht" (Werke, p. 37). Just such a comic touch demonstrates the shallowness of this grandiose speech. Leonce and Valerio, in Leonce und Lena, both make fun of the emptiness of this way of speaking. Leonce greets Valerio as a god, but "mit komischem Enthusiasmus" (Werke, p. 118), while the latter, in his vision of the future, spoils the classical perfection of music and luxurious food with the mention of "Makkaroni . . . und eine commode Religion!" (Werke, p. 147). Leonce can, however, take such matters seriously, as his description of classical Italy shows (Werke, p. 128). In a half-comic, half-serious light, Büchner uses a classical reference to reveal the complete inadequacy of Leonce, and the danger of his future position. Leonce comments idly: "Meine Herren, meine Herren, wisst ihr auch, was Caligula und Nero

waren? Ich weiss es" (Werke, p. 123), but Leonce is at the end of the play the new ruler of a kingdom with very real problems though they are treated comically in the course of the drama. He himself seems unaware of the gravity of his reference.

Another element which contributes to the elevated, refined quality of upper class speech is the inclusion of specialised language, which is again characteristic of the educated class. Like the use of classical and historical embellishments, this specialised language, touching on aesthetics, philosophy and science, is not in itself deserving of criticism. Büchner questions, however, the sense of priority of a culture which is socially culpable and yet lays such stress on the refinements of education, by placing this language in the mouths of his upper class characters with all their other weaknesses.

Philosophy suffers perhaps most of all in Büchner's works. We have already discussed philosophy as a manifestation of introversion; in addition, it can be claimed that it has little relevance to reality, however valid and logical it may be in itself. We have seen how Payne's words in the prison scene of Dantons Tod are treated ironically. The clever sophistry of his thinking offers no real solace to his companions, and his appearance seems estranged from the turmoil of the Revolution. His wisdom is, in this way, invalidated by the suffering around him. Danton's ponderings on nihilism also possess this quality of estrangement, both from his companions and from the reality outside, for they are couched

in metaphors. His words do, however, make a more realistic impression, since they are sincere doubts arising from the futility of his own actions in life.

The schism between a sense of humanity and science is criticised in the Doctor in Woyzeck. The callous attitude of the Doctor has already been noted. To make him more abhorrent, Büchner shows the man being absorbed by his knowledge, for all of the Doctor's speech is no more than a caricature on the way a Doctor lists, examines and looks for symptoms (Werke, pp. 161-162), or on the ludicrous misuse of scientific terms, as when he throws a cat out of the window, proclaiming: "Wie wird diese Wesenheit sich zum centrum gravitationis gemäss ihrem eigenen Instinkt verhalten?" (Werke, p. 167). The speech of the Doctor is throughout full of Latin terms--an element suggesting a hollow and misplaced learning.

The ridicule of the appearance and behaviour of the Doctor and the Captain on stage is the visual means which Büchner uses to mock and criticise them: the high point of his portrayal is the meeting of the two, and their empty, absurd exchanges (Werke, p. 161). Their crazed, irrational speech also makes of them mere puppets, as Kayser calls them,¹⁰ mechanically dependent on the fixed ideas represented by science and philosophy.

One other important aspect of the speech of the higher class in all the dramas must be discussed: the characters from the higher class cannot, or refuse to, communicate, and they remain essentially isolated and self-interested. This isolation is expressed clearly by Danton: "wir sind sehr

einsam" (Werke, p. 9); and by Robespierre: "es ist alles wüst und leer--ich bin allein" (Werke, p. 33). Leonce suffers from loneliness throughout the comedy, until he meets Lena. He, too, expresses the sadness of his isolation: "Ich wette gewöhnlich mit mir selbst und kann es tagelang so treiben. Wenn Sie einen Menschen aufzutreiben wissen, der Lust hätte, manchmal mit mir zu wetten, so werden Sie mich sehr verbinden" (Werke, p. 115).

The loneliness and isolation are, however, everywhere apparent in the speech of the higher class, even though characters themselves are often not conscious of their lack of communication. Just such a lack of communication is noted by Krapp amongst the revolutionaries in Dantons Tod especially in the first scene: "Die Freunde aber diskutieren nicht. In solcher Sprache dokumentiert, wird ihre Gesinnungseinheit unweigerlich zum Monolog, derfugal sich an verschiedene Sprecher verteilt."¹¹ Even in the prison scene, when nothing is left but companionship, much of the conversation develops into unanswered questions suggesting the monologue form: "Sind denn die hässlichen Töne," is followed, though not answered, by another question: "Sind wir wie Ferkel, . . . ?" another: "Sind wir Kinder, . . . ?" and yet another: "Ist denn der Äther . . . ?" (Werke, p. 78). Höllerer refers to this chorus as "einem einzigen Monolog mit verteilten Rollen."¹²

The monologue is also a characteristic aspect of Leonce und Lena. The form is even stressed by the lonely Leonce, who realises the misery of his position: "Komm, Leonce, halte mir einen Monolog, ich will zuhören" (Werke,

p. 123). His isolation results in a state of duality which is inherently neurotic and he becomes simultaneously speaker and audience, a tendency already present in his mad father: "Wenn ich so laut rede, so weiss ich nicht, wer es eigentlich ist, ich oder ein anderer" (Werke, p. 119). The monologue, emphasising the isolation of the rulers in Popo; is also suggested by Büchner's treatment of the courtiers, who echo the words of the rulers, without actually answering them. This is especially evident in the scenes at the Court in I,1, I,2 and III,3.

In Woyzeck, lack of communication is a striking aspect of the behaviour of the characters. It is seen as either a tragic or a comic aspect of the language. Woyzeck cannot communicate, even with Marie, so that the most intense moments of tragedy occur, showing him to be alone and helpless. There are other examples of failure at communication, however, which are treated comically, and which are useful in examining Büchner's portrayal of the upper class. One form of non-communication is significant in separating the classes, and is demonstrated in the opening scene, in which the Captain talks at Woyzeck, rather than to him, for the latter is simply not concerned with the ponderings of his senior. His repeated "Jawohl, Herr Hauptmann" (Werke, p. 151) isolates the Captain, who is virtually delivering a monologue. Exactly the same contrast is evident between Woyzeck and his other superior, the Doctor: "He is not so much addressing Woyzeck as talking to himself."¹³ Even together, the Doctor and the Captain cannot communicate. In their encounter on the street, the

Captain talks about his personal problems, while the Doctor simultaneously lists the symptoms he notes, something he insists on throughout the scene, though it is far removed from the subjects of discussion.

In the speeches of the Doctor and the Captain, there is an element of nonsense, resulting from the reduction of the specialised language of philosophy and science to minima which are barely comprehensible to others. Hence the concept of a mill-wheel stimulates the Captain to great melancholy: the connection is only maintained by a consideration of the philosophy of time, which the Captain has attempted to grasp, but without success. A similar effect is made by his comment: "Ich muss immer weinen, wenn ich meinen Rock an der Wand hängen sehe" (Werke, p. 161). What is nonsense for others, signifies for him a whole series of thoughts on time, living and death. This type of nonsensical talk cannot, of course, be confused with Woyzeck's strange utterings. The latter's psychopathic visions and puzzling comments are meant to be taken seriously as part of Woyzeck's make-up and personal tragedy.

The element of nonsensical talk is also present in Leonce und Lena. Apart from functioning as a highly comic element in the drama, nonsense-talk also becomes a sign of disorder and neurosis. The clearest example of this is the mad king. In the case of Leonce, the nonsense is an integral part of his isolation and consequent neurosis. His nonsensical jokes astound his attendants, puzzle Rosetta, and can only be matched by the equally nonsensical jokes of Valerio.

Leonce communicates verbally chiefly with himself.

The lavish use of imagery is one main embellishment of the speech of the higher class in both Dantons Tod and Leonce und Lena. Similes and metaphors abound, giving the impression of a language which is not only ornate and extravagant in parts, but also forced, and often false. Landau speaks of "grandiose Phantasie" and "immer gesuchteren Vergleichen und forcierten Pointen,"¹⁴ in the last scenes of Dantons Tod. Extensive imagery occurs throughout the drama, used mainly by the bourgeois characters. Danton, the most spiritually refined character, makes the greatest use of imagery, in describing first his personal life: "nein, Julie, ich liebe dich wie das Grab Du süßes Grab, deine Lippen sind Totenglocken" (Werke, pp. 9-10); his body: "Mein lieber Leib, ich will mir die Nase zuhalten und mir einbilden, du seist ein Frauenzimmer, was vom Tanzen schwitzt und stinkt, und dir Artigkeiten sagen" (Werke, p. 72); and finally, the whole universe, the whole of life: "Das Nichts hat sich ermordet, die Schöpfung ist seine Wunde, wir sind seine Blutstropfen, die Welt ist das Grab, worin es fault" (Werke, p. 67).

So many emotions, those of violence, love, fear, pain and despair, are channelled into metaphors and similes, that the effect is almost overpowering. Not only Danton but also his own companions, and his enemies illustrate this kind of speech. The imagery reflects subtle thinking, but since it dominates the speech of the revolutionaries, the spontaneity, and even sincerity, of what is being said is sometimes ques-

tioned. The constant resorting to metaphors indicates occasionally a duality within the speaker, a duality similar to that already discussed with reference to St. Just and the revolutionaries in scene one, in which there is, too, a great number of images: "Die Staatsform muss ein durchsichtiges Gewand sein, das sich dicht an den Leib des Volkes schmiegt" (Werke, p. 11).

One particular image lends credence to this statement about the duality of the upper class characters: the "Spieler" motif and its variations, which find expression in both Dantons Tod and Leonce und Lena. The image of the actor is often used by Danton to express certain views on life: "wir stehen immer auf dem Theater, wenn wir auch zuletzt im Ernst erstochen werden" (Werke, p. 36). The image of the puppet, too, a variation on the theme, expresses for Danton¹⁵ the peculiar helplessness of man and his fate: "Puppen sind wir, von unbekannten Gewalten am Draht gezogen" (Werke, p. 45). The same helplessness is expressed in a similar way by Leonce (Werke, p. 116).

Writing about Danton, Eva Friedrich comments on this "Spieler" motif, noting how Danton is "Spieler und Schauspieler seiner selbst."¹⁶ Danton himself is certainly half-aware of his play-acting, even with the serious business of death: "Ich kokettiere mit dem Tod; es ist ganz angenehm, so aus der Ferne mit dem Lorgnon mit ihm zu liebäugeln" (Werke, p. 42). This duality is also evident in Leonce, in his remark: "Komm, Leonce, halte mir einen Monolog, ich will zuhören" (Werke, p. 123).

Imagery connected with death is another element common to both plays. This type of imagery is connected with the engrossment in death discussed as part of the upper class neurosis in chapter II. It provides a suitable background to the neurosis inherent in the characters of the plays, and the rottenness connected with their type of society: "Das Picken der Totenuhr in unserer Brust ist langsam, und jeder Tropfen Blut misst seine Zeit, und unser Leben ist ein schleichend Fieber" (Werke, p. 134). Danton also expresses this concept of life as a living death: "Wir sind alle lebendig begraben" (Werke, p. 67). Both, too, conceive of love as connected to death (Werke, p. 9 and p. 131).

There is one important type of imagery analysed by Krapp, which is striking and illuminating. According to Krapp, Büchner was the first German author to use a new kind of image, of which there are several examples in the two dramas: "Mein Kopf ist ein leerer Tanzsaal, einige verwelkte Rosen und zerknitterte Bänder auf dem Boden" (Werke, p. 123); "Mensch, du bist nichts als ein schlechtes Wortspiel" (Werke, p. 126); "Morgen bist du eine zerbrochene Fiedel . . . Morgen bist du eine leere Bouteille" (Werke, p. 72); "Du süßes Grab, deine Lippen sind Totenglocken . . . " (Werke, p. 10). This type of image is different from the ordinary comparison which acknowledges in some way the rational connection, the relationship, between the two parts of the comparison. With Büchner, there is no such rational element, only "daß Ungeheure einer Gleichsetzung."¹⁷

The use of this "irrational" image is appropriate to the sensitive, highly refined characters of Danton and Leonce. The connection with the neurotic tendencies of the two figures is obvious, since the image can be used as a direct expression of the chaos and disorder in their minds. There is one other danger, as Krapp has noticed.¹⁸ The image is highly individual, as well as irrational, so that its meaning is not necessarily communicable as a form of dialogue, but retains the quality of a monologue, of individuality to the point of isolation.

The problem of isolation brings us back to an earlier point: the lack of communication amongst the members of the higher class. Krapp claims that communication "ist möglich nur, wenn die Sprache ein Fundament garantiert, das allen Figuren gleich gilt und Verbindlichkeit schafft, ohne die eine Kommunikation unmöglich bleibt."¹⁹ In considering the lack of communication, it is possible to connect it with the egocentricity of the upper class, for both give stress to the individual, rather than the group, or the society: "man spricht, um sich voneinander fernzuhalten, ja es gehört zum Paradoxen dieser Gesellschaft, dass sie das Inselhafte des Einzelnen fühlbar werden lässt."²⁰

2. Language of the lower class

In considering the language of the lower class in Büchner's dramas, two qualities are outstanding: its primitiveness, and its sincerity. As the uneducated members of society, their speech shows none of the adornments and abstractions characteristic of the language of the higher class. As a result, there is no suggestion of falseness or subtlety, but of great spontaneity.

Whenever the common people are on the stage in Dantons Tod, the dominant tone is one of vitality, which is expressed in direct and straightforward language. The contrast to the idle talk and subtle language of the bourgeois revolutionaries is apparent in the first crowd scene. It is preceded by the scene amongst the Danton supporters, in which the duality and the impersonality of the speech was noted above. Immediately following are the words of Simon: "Du Kuppelpelz, du runzliche Sublimatpille, du wurmstichischer Sündenapfel!" (Werke, p. 13). These words are vital, full of emotion, very personal, and also realistic to the point of being crude. They are also refreshing after the long speeches and theories of the first scene. The tone is thus set for the remainder of the crowd scenes in the drama. The naivety demonstrated in this scene is also indicated as dangerous: possessing little or no verbal subtlety of their own, the people fall victim to it, on hearing the powerful speech of Robespierre. At all points in the drama, the crowd is easily swayed by a clever speech from either party.

Crudity is one aspect of the people's speech. It takes the form either of genuine humour, as in II,6, or of an unpleasant callousness, as in the later scene in which the women wait to see the Danton party executed: "Wir warten auf alte Kunden" (Werke, p. 75). Their speech indicates both good and bad qualities amongst the people.

The people speak a much simpler language than the higher class. Büchner uses the repetitive elements of everyday speech to contribute towards the naturalness of their

language: "seht ihr". (Werke, p. 14), "dacht ich" (Werke, p. 81), and "sehn Sie" (Werke, p. 152). The sentences used by them give the impression of being naturally and spontaneously formed. They are often, and especially in Woyzeck, incomplete, yet they communicate the meaning efficiently.

The element of communication is what binds the common people together, and what separates them from the higher class. Even when the dramatist is using the crowd scenes for some effect of rhetoric, as in I,2, it is a different kind from the impersonal abstractions of the bourgeois characters, for it is a rhetoric which unites the people in an outburst of feeling: "Und in monotoner Aufzählung wird der Überdruß der Massen provoziert, die denn auch am Ende im Sprechchor, diese Szene beschliessend, in ihr hitziges 'Totgeschlagen! Totgeschlagen!' ausbrechen können."²¹

Even the desperate and often inarticulate words of Woyzeck aim at communicating, both with his superiors (an attempt doomed to failure) and with his equals. He is constantly seeking responses: "Andres, der Platz ist verflucht. Siehst du den lichten Streif da über das Gras hin; wo die Schwämme so nachwachsen?" (Werke, p. 153); "Marie, es war wieder was, viel--steht nicht geschrieben: Und sieh, da ging ein Rauch vom Land, wie der Rauch vom Ofen?" (Werke, pp. 154-155). His questions are an attempt at communication, and they fail. His effort to communicate, however, is of primary importance, even though it is defeated by his psychopathic tendencies.

The folk-song is another characteristic device of the crowd scenes in Dantons Tod and in Woyzeck, and a very important and significant aspect of Büchner's dramatic style, for in the folk-song he chooses to embody some basic truths about man's life, and about the society with which the poet is dealing. As the language of the common people, the folk-song represents "das stets beständige Element, das unablässig und unerbittlich die 'Wirklichkeit' hervorzerrt und kündet."²² The folk-songs stress the essential rather than the superficial or incidental: the pain of love, lust, man's basically material make-up, the inconstancy of life and the certainty of death.

The details and functions of the folk-song cannot be dealt with fully in this examination. What is important for this study in Büchner's portrayal of the people is that they, the least civilised and least cultured, possess the language which both reveals the truth, and unmask's falseness. The clearest example of unmasking is the promenade scene of Dantons Tod, where the Beggar's song is the realistic counterpart to the hopes of the bourgeoisie: "Das Volkslied beraubt somit die bürgerliche Philosophie ihrer Teleologie, es bleibt nur noch 'Eine Handvoll Erde und ein wenig Moos'" ²³ The folk-song serves yet again to separate the classes, for it is the most complete basic expression of truth and sincerity, belonging to the realm of the people, and thus it invalidates what is not worthwhile in the refinements of society. It also separates the lower class from the upper, by being part of the vitality of the crowd.

The folk-song is a form of truth and vitality in Büchner's works: it is the antithesis to falseness and deadness, which he is criticising in organised society. Fink indicates the social implications involved in his discussion of this particular means of expression of the people: "Seine Wortführer kommen ausschliesslich aus der Welt der Armut. . . . Sie stehen alle durch Not oder eigene Wahl ausserhalb der bestehenden sozialen Ordnung und können so der Verblendung der bürgerlichen Scheinwerte entgehen."²⁴

Just as Woyzeck, who is outside society, has a far more sensitive appreciation of what man should be, so the singers of the folk-song are primarily those excluded from any worthy place in society. Yet they are the ones who are closest to the truth, rather than the educated characters who have the necessary training and disciplining to seek the truth for themselves. The simpler, poorer, and often scorned, people also have a greater ability to communicate with each other on matters of mutual concern. Naturally, the representatives of the upper class are exposed to a far greater range of intellectual problems than the simpler minds of the people, but they appear to have been spoilt by their intellectual capacities. In a drama intended to be acted, the activities of the characters on stage form an essential and immediate way of communicating the author's message. By portraying the weaknesses of the higher class figures in their behaviour and talk, as well as in their ideas, Büchner does much to even the unfair balance of his times, by exalting the scorned and castigating the educated.

CONCLUSION

In this study of the social classes, we have seen how Büchner examines the values of man as they are demonstrated in various aspects of life in a class society. The basic question raised by his examination is: what has social organisation of this kind done to, and for, man?

Before attempting an answer to this question, the problem of the nature of man himself must be considered. We have noted the various answers to this question of man's make-up which are embodied in Büchner's writing. Man is a creature with a mind, a body and also a need for love and companionship. This latter need is basic to all Büchner's sincere and sympathetic characters: Danton, Woyzeck and Leonce. It is also the most simple and fundamental basis for a society. Nor must it be forgotten that there is another potentially dangerous aspect to man: he is weak, and prone to evil.

Ideally, society should cater to all man's needs, providing companionship, opportunity for the fulfilment and recognition of the body and the mind, and also providing the protection of man from his own weakness. In his portrayal of the upper class, Büchner shows how the society which they have formed has failed on each of these issues. It has produced men who are lonely, unfulfilled and frustrated, as well as an organised system under which a large number of its members suffer actively.

In the creation of a powerful minority group--"die Reichen," as Büchner calls them--the weakness of man, his

tendency towards evil, and especially his egocentricity are all intensified. As we have seen, egocentricity is the fault or weakness of all Büchner's characters from the upper class; it is felt by him personally to be the outstanding characteristic of existent society. Even Danton, who is by far the most sympathetic figure in the upper strata of society, is influenced and often defeated by it. The diverse consequences of this egocentricity have been examined: it is the partial cause of the oppression of the lower class; it also aggravates the personal problems to which man falls prey. Büchner portrays no positive element in the representatives of the upper class, which is social in the simplest sense of the word. All have been turned inward by their material interests and educational pursuits, and in this way they have developed distorted values. The society which they have made is thus characterised by lovelessness towards mankind as a whole.

It is clear that Büchner expects no change and sees no hope in this class. Consequently, he turns to the people, the poor class, as an alternative influence in shaping society. As the victims of the class system, they have had no part in forming its values and controlling its development. Büchner hopes tentatively for a better system under them, not because they have any outstanding innate merit not found in their superiors, but because they are the least corrupted members of society. They, rather than the upper class figures, still possess an intuitive sense of the basic attributes of man, in particular his need for companionship. They alone demonstrate

the power of love for others. In turning to the people, Büchner is also encouraged by the fact that they are numerically stronger; their rule would be the rule of the majority, and possibly a greater safeguard against the weakness of man in serving the interests of society at large.

The representatives of the people are, however, far from perfect, as we have seen; there is no guarantee that they would not be corrupted in the same way, when exposed to power, education and wealth. Nevertheless, Büchner saw at that time no way out under the system as it stood. The people offered the way to a different society, which Büchner hoped would be a better one. Again it must be stressed that the hope is tentative only: Büchner experienced failure in his private life when he attempted to lead the people; in his works, too, he indicates no immediate solution to the problems of man in society. We know that he personally despaired of the possibility of immediate change. By portraying the decay inherent in society's ruling castes, however, and stressing the potential good in the people, it is evident that Büchner is pointing to what he feels to be the ultimate and inevitable development of man towards a healthier and more humane society.

Büchner's awareness of social problems and his treatment of them as dramatic themes and material are remarkable. He is ahead of his time both as a social thinker and as a dramatist. His plays were not produced, in fact, until long after his death (Dantons Tod and Woyzeck were both produced in the early years of this century) and his merit as an artist was first acclaimed and understood by later writers of the

Naturalist and Expressionist schools.

Büchner's standpoint with regard to social problems is already well-known; in this thesis, no new light has been shed on his ideas themselves. An attempt has been made, however, to discuss the social question simultaneously from different viewpoints, and it was hoped in this way to substantiate more comprehensively the degree of Büchner's conviction, and the importance of his treatment of social problems for his stature as a dramatist.

IntroductionFootnotes

- ¹Ludwig Büttner, Georg Büchner. Revolutionär und Pessimist (Nuremberg, 1948), p. 6.
- ²From August Becker's police testimony, quoted in Fritz Bergemann, ed. Georg Büchner. Werke und Briefe, new revised edition (Wiesbaden, 1958), p. 561. All subsequent references to the works of Büchner will be to this edition and abbreviated to Werke.
- ³See the articles on critical works by Fritz Bergemann, "Georg-Büchner-Schrifttum seit 1937," Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift, XXV (1951), 112-121; and by Horst Oppel, "Stand und Aufgaben der Büchner-Forschung," Euphorion, XLIX (1955), 91-109.
- ⁴The term "private," for the purposes of this thesis, should be taken to mean Büchner's non-artistic writings.
- ⁵The word "spiritual" will be used throughout with the meaning which it had in Büchner's time, that is, as the antithesis of what is bodily. It includes, therefore, the shades of meaning which today would perhaps be expressed by the terms "psychological" and "emotional."

Chapter I

Footnotes

- ¹Hans Mayer, Georg Büchner und seine Zeit (Berlin, 1960), pp. 273-274.
- ²Karl Viëtor, Georg Büchner als Politiker (Bern, 1950), p. 94.
- ³See also Dantons Tod (Werke, p. 45), and the letter to Minna Jaegle, probably from Giessen, in November, 1833 (Werke, p. 374).
- ⁴Bergemann and Witkowski, for example, the most reputable editors, and Leippe reject it, whereas Edschmid and zur Nedden incorporate it into the final version. Information found in Hermann van Dam, "Zu Georg Büchners 'Woyzeck,'" Akzente, I (1954), 82-88. Mayer, Knight and Viëtor also reject the scene in their interpretations of the drama.
- ⁵Friedrich Gundolf, Romantiker (Berlin, 1930), p. 392. Reprinted in Georg Büchner, ed. Wolfgang Martens (Darmstadt, 1965), p. 94.
- ⁶Mayer, p. 336.
- ⁷Karl Viëtor, Georg Büchner. Politik. Dichtung. Wissenschaft (Bern, 1949), p. 206.
- ⁸Ludwig Büttner, Georg Büchner. Revolutionär und Pessimist (Nuremberg, 1948), p. 95.
- ⁹Elise Dosenheimer, Das deutsche soziale Drama von Lessing bis Sternheim (Constance, 1949), pp. 69-78.
- ¹⁰Kurt May, Form und Bedeutung (Stuttgart, 1957), pp. 270-272.
- ¹¹Hermann van Dam, "Zu Georg Büchners 'Woyzeck,'" Akzente, I (1954), 94-96.
- ¹²See Büchner's letter to his family, from Strasbourg, in January, 1836 (Werke, pp. 407-408).
- ¹³Georg Lukacs, Deutsche Realisten des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (Berlin, 1951), p. 76.
- ¹⁴Fritz Werner, "Georg Büchners Drama Dantons Tod und das Problem der Revolution," Die Welt als Geschichte, XII (1952), 170.
- ¹⁵Lukacs, pp. 75-77.

Chapter II

Footnotes

- ¹Benno von Wiese, Zwischen Utopie und Wirklichkeit (Düsseldorf, 1963), p. 127.
- ²Wolfgang Martens, "Zur Karikatur in der Dichtung Büchners," Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, VIII (1958), 69.
- ³Georg Lukacs, Deutsche Realisten des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (Berlin, 1951), p. 77.
- ⁴Herbert Lindenberger, Georg Büchner (Carbondale, III., 1964), p. 105.
- ⁵Lindenberger, p. 104.
- ⁶Kurt May, "Woyzeck," in Das deutsche Drama II, ed. Benno von Wiese (Düsseldorf, 1960), p. 93.
- ⁷Hans Jürgen Geerdts, "Georg Büchners Volksauffassung," Weimarer Beiträge, IX-X (1963-64), 648.
- ⁸Geerdts, 646.
- ⁹See Büchner's letters from Strasbourg, in December, 1832, to his family (Werke, p. 367); from Strasbourg, probably in 1835, to Gutzkow (Werke, p. 396); and from Strasbourg, in 1836, to Gutzkow (Werke, p. 412).
- ¹⁰Ludwig Büttner, Georg Büchner. Revolutionär und Pessimist (Nuremberg, 1948), p. 113.
- ¹¹Paul Rilla, Literatur. Kritik und Polemik (Berlin, 1950), p. 144.
- ¹²Lindenberger, p. 107.

Chapter IIIFootnotes

- ¹Ludwig Büttner, Georg Büchner. Revolutionär und Pessimist (Nuremberg, 1948), p. 124.
- ²Karl Viëtor, Georg Büchner. Politik. Dichtung. Wissenschaft (Bern, 1949), p. 133.
- ³Gonthier-Louis Fink, "Volkslied und Verseinlage in den Dramen Büchners," Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift, XXXV (1961), 577.
- ⁴Benno von Wiese, Die deutsche Tragödie von Lessing bis Hebbel, 5th ed. (Hamburg, 1961), p. 517.
- ⁵von Wiese, p. 532.
- ⁶Viëtor, p. 207.
- ⁷Herbert Lindenberger, Georg Büchner (Carbondale, Ill., 1964), p. 93.
- ⁸Franz Mautner, "Wortgewebe, Sinngefüge und 'Idee' in Büchners 'Woyzeck,'" Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift, XXXV (1961), 535.
- ⁹Ronald Peacock, "A note on Georg Büchner's plays," German Life and Letters, X (1956-57), 192.

Chapter IV

Footnotes

- ¹Gerhart Baumann, Georg Büchner. Die dramatische Ausdrucks-
welt (Göttingen, 1961), p. 199.
- ²Herbert Lindenberger, Goerg Büchner (Carbondale, Ill., 1964),
p. 22.
- ³Helmut Krapp, Der Dialog bei Georg Büchner (Darmstadt, 1958),
pp. 85-87.
- ⁴Krapp, p. 95.
- ⁵Krapp, pp. 29-44.
- ⁶Krapp, p. 35.
- ⁷Krapp, p. 40.
- ⁸Krapp, pp. 43-44.
- ⁹Lindenberger, p. 24.
- ¹⁰Wolfgang Kayser, Das Groteske (Oldenburg, 1957), p. 99.
- ¹¹Krapp, p. 35.
- ¹²Walter Hüllerer, Zwischen Klassik und Moderne (Stuttgart,
1958), p. 114.
- ¹³Lindenberger, p. 104.
- ¹⁴Paul Landau, ed. Georg Büchners Gesammelte Schriften I (Ber-
lin, 1909), p. 87. Reprinted in Georg Büchner, ed.
Wolfgang Martens (Darmstadt, 1965), p. 29.
- ¹⁵See also Büchner's letter to his fiancée, probably from
Giessen, in November, 1833 (Werke, p. 374).
- ¹⁶Eva Friedrich, "Georg Büchner und die französische Revolution"
(diss. Winterthur, 1956), p. 20.
- ¹⁷Krapp, p. 63.
- ¹⁸Krapp, p. 66.
- ¹⁹Krapp, p. 66.
- ²⁰Baumann, p. 9.

²¹Krapp, p. 39.

²²Gonthier-Louis Fink, "Volkslied und Verseinlage in den Dramen Büchners," Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift, XXXV (1961), 580.

²³Fink, 577.

²⁴Fink, 592.

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